柳実冬貴

# 対魔導学園35試験小隊

AntiMagic Academy "The 35th Test Platoon"

## 4.愚者達の学園祭

ファンタジア文庫

# AntiMagic Academy "The 35th Test Platoon" 対魔導学園 35 試験小隊

## Volume – 4 - Festival of Fools - Dance with Lost Rabbit

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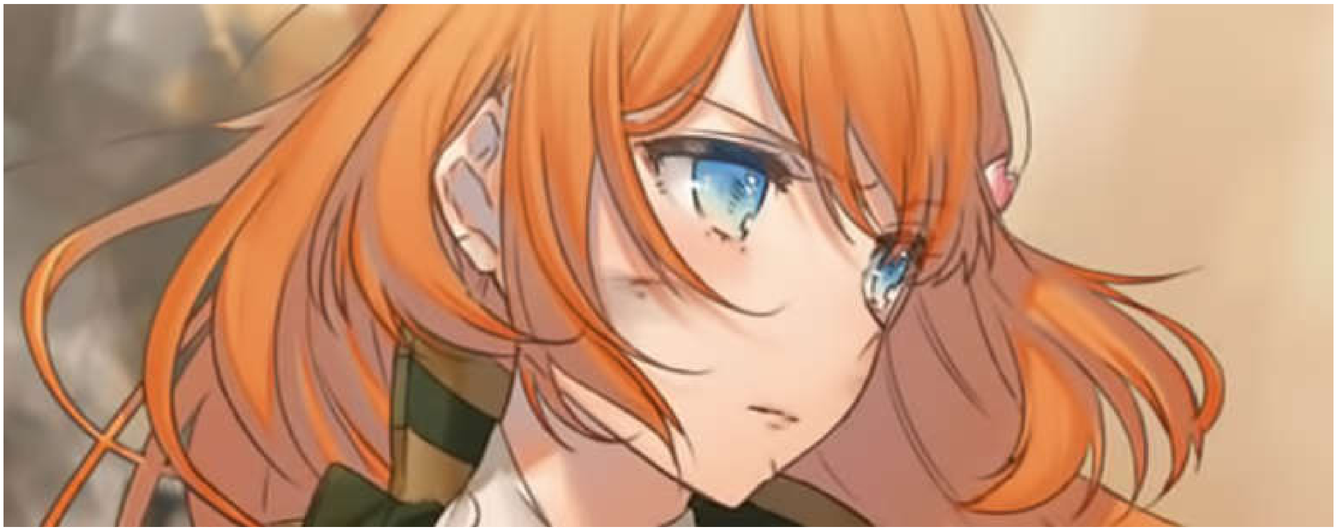
# Credits



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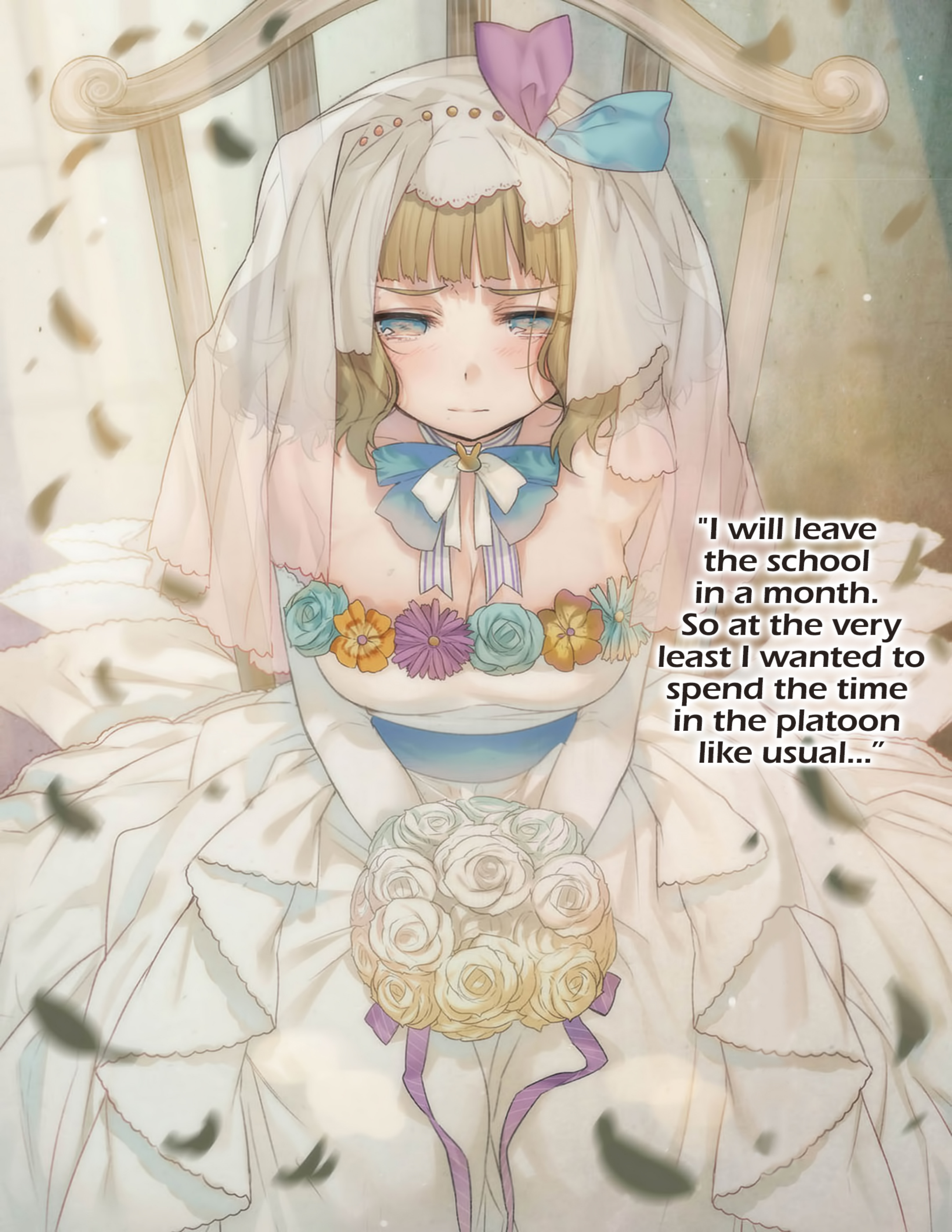
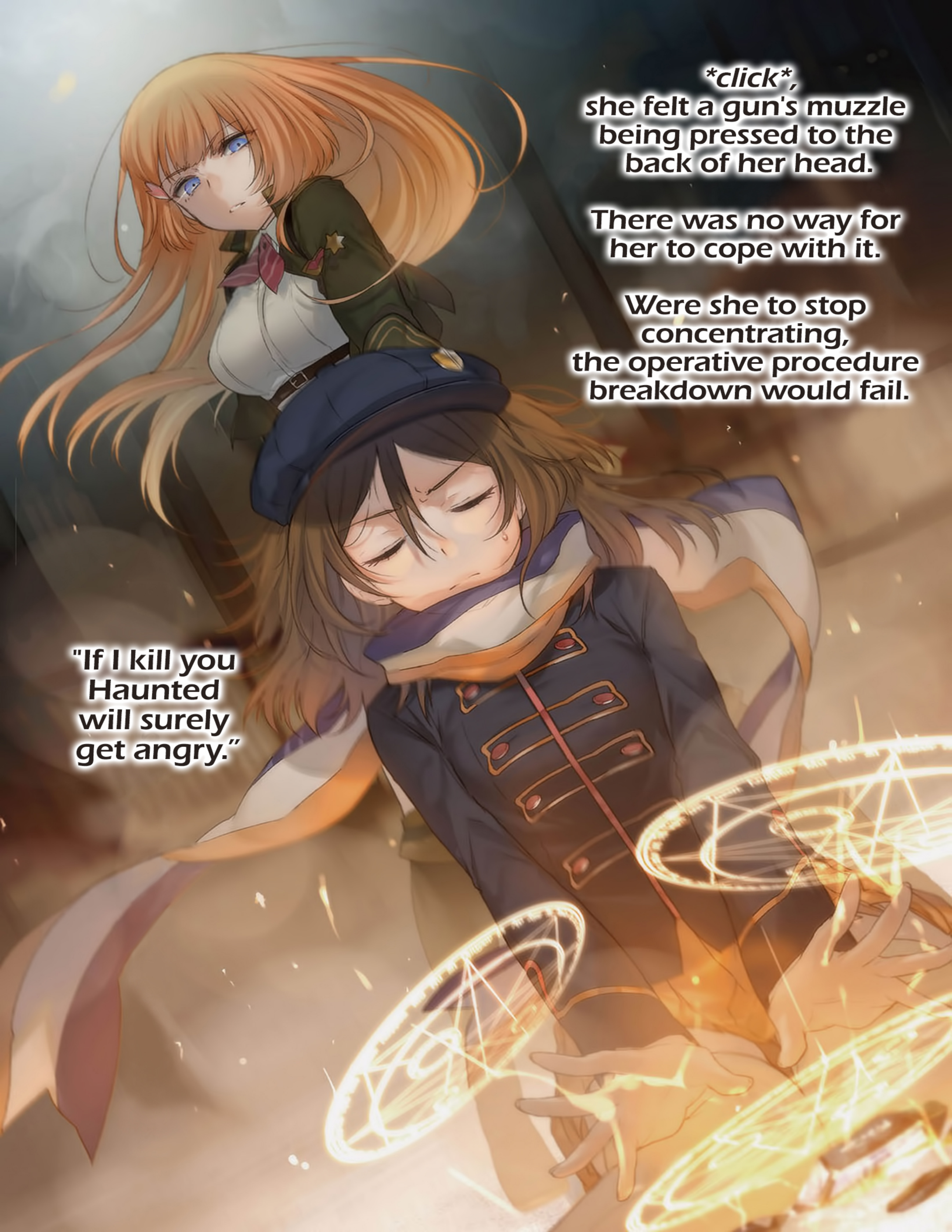
## 4.Dance with lost rabbit



"I will leave the school in a month. So at the very least I wanted to spend the time in the platoon like usual..."


*click*, she felt a gun's muzzle being pressed to the back of her head.
There was no way for her to cope with it.
Were she to stop concentrating, the operative procedure breakdown would fail.
"If I kill you Haunted will surely get angry."

# Prologue

"——So, how are your studies?"

Under a light stand made out of parchment, lit by it was an elderly woman with glasses, she was writing a document.

On the opposite side of her, on a sofa made out of natural leather was Saionji Usagi.

Usagi had blonde hair extending to her shoulders, she looked pretty tense. Her appearance resembled that of a young rabbit that had strayed from its parent in winter.

In front of her was Saionji Kikyou. Wife of the current family head, in other words she was Usagi's mother.

"Umm.. um... that's."

"Please don't waste my time."

She said that strongly, causing Usagi to tremble.

Her eyes watered up, and her heart started to beat soundly.

Kikyou glared at Usagi, causing the wrinkles around her eyes to deepen.

Usagi desperately calmed herself down, and grabbed the hem of her skirt.

"M-my life in the academy... umm... is very... rich. Every day is... fun."

"…………"

"Also comrades! I have comrades now! I'm no longer a poor dropout, they're all oddballs, but also interesting people. Of course I'm the best among them. If I'm not there they can't pull it off and can't do anything. Just before I——"

"——Usagi-san."

Cutting in, Kikyou stopped Usagi from talking. Usagi's shoulders, and her entire body trembled as if she was splashed with cold water.

"Did you not understand my question?"

"E...uu."

"I asked whether you are going to get promoted, or not, that's the only thing I want to know. Don't waste my time with trivialities."

"I-I.... I apologize."

Usagi looked down while at a loss for words. Kikyou ignited the tobacco pipe placed in the ashtray and breathed the tobacco smoke deeply.

"Well, you tried to divert the story, but it's impossible. With such results, there is no way you will get a promotion."

She took the paper from the desk, and threw it towards Usagi as if discarding it.

Usagi couldn't catch them, and they scattered all over the carpet.

These were the report cards. The results she had in AntiMagic Academy, their overall ranking was marked.

"Did you think you can trick me? I've heard about your results in the academy before."

I didn't intend to do that. She tried to say so, but her voice was stuck in her throat.

Usagi didn't really want to divert the story, and she didn't want to hide her performance. She just wanted to talk as family with the person who was in front of her; her mother.

"At this rate, graduation aside, promotion to the second grade is impossible."

"That's not decided ye——"

"The deadline is in a few months. No matter how you look at it, it's impossible. There is no way that'll happen. We didn't have much expectations in the first place, there was no need for you to go to school... it's all because grandfather left us a troublesome will."

Hearing Kikyou's words, Usagi raised her face frightened.

"The matter from before, let's hurry the schedule up. We've been already reminded of it by their son. That person seems to really like you, there should be no problems."

"P-please wait a moment! That matter was to be done after I graduate from school——"

"You are going to attend the school until this month ends. The Saionji house cannot afford to waste money for tuition fees as it is now."

"Please...! I won't disappoint you any more! I'll do my best so it's not wasted! Just don't make me quit the school!"

"Silence. You are going to sacrifice yourself so that the Saionji house can survive. Discard your personal feelings and think about your position."

While saying that, Kikyou fixed her glasses with her hand, and stood up from the chair.

"Wait! Mother——!"

Usagi stood up in a hurry and tried to grab Kikyou's hand.

And Kikyou violently shook that hand off.

"Don't touch me. I'm not your mother."

Shocked and scared, Usagi was unable to move.

"If not for you, everything would have been well. You reap what you sow."

Kikyou left these words behind, as she was leaving the room, Usagi who was the only one left behind, sunk in despair.

"..........."

Without fixing her untidy hair, Usagi picked up the documents scattered on the carpet and held them to her chest.

"It's all right... it's... all..."

In this house, there is no place for her. She confirmed that.

At a time like this, she wanted to head back to that place.

The only place there was for Usagi.

Cramped, smelling with gunpowder, there wasn't much in there, but in that place were very important people to her.

As she thought that she wanted to stay in that place for a little bit longer, a tremendous loneliness struck her chest. But there was no way Usagi could resist.

There was no way for her to change her destiny of being tied to this house. She could only accept it. That was all.

The fact that it would be like this, was decided from the very beginning.

# Chapter 1 - Witch-Hunting Festival

On a forest road on the outskirts, under a single glittering street-light, there were two people.

One of them was a student of AntiMagic Academy. The other one's identity couldn't be determined because of the darkness.

"I finally got you cornered, Mephistopheles!"

The boy standing under the flashing street-light released a murderous intent towards the other one.

Probably because of the intense flashing light, the identity of the other existence standing there was unclear.

It was even unknown whether it was a man, or a woman. However, for some reason the boy had a feeling the other person was smiling.

"You can only laugh now... I'll take revenge and destroy you right now."

The boy approached the enemy while aiming his handgun.

But the figure still had a big smile. As the fluorescent lamp flashed, it moved its lips.

"——Revenge? What are you saying? Aren't we best friends, you and I."

As if the intensity of sound was messed up, the unclear voice resonated under the night sky.

Wrinkles appeared between the boy's eyebrows. Strength was applied to the boy's fingertip placed on the trigger.

He won't miss. At this distance, he will definitely pierce its heart.

The boy clenched his teeth and released the bullet.

The bullet shot by the boy flew straight, and hit the figure slightly to the left of its chest; a direct hit to the heart.

The figure staggered, and its knees folded as if it was a broken doll, it fell on its stomach after that.

After approaching it, the boy turned the corpse over with his feet.

At the same time, the face of the corpse was clearly reflected in the light from the flashing street lamp.

The boy's face was distorted with grief.

"...... Damn... it...!"

It was the corpse of a person who was this boy's best friend, with whom he went through both joys and sorrow.

"I took revenge... for you... so... sleep in peace."

Attempting to close his eyes, the boy touched his eyelids.

That's when he noticed it was a mistake. The corpse suddenly started moving and grabbed the boy's arm.

"Wha——t?!"

Even before the boy could react in surprise, the corpse rose up.

Right in front of the boy's eyes was the face of his best friend, causing him to pull his face away.

"WhaaATt a shAAmEEee!"

"...your heart should be destroyed!"

"Ahya! Ahyahyahyahyahya!"

The corpse thrashed and waved violently making loud noises.

After a few seconds, from the left side of his chest; full of holes, came the sound of a heartbeat confirming the heart was still working.

"Did you... move your internal organs positions?!"

"The heart's on the righttt, I had to use precious instant charms, but it's good that I did. That was really dangerous."

Quickly realizing that the situation was completely reversed, the boy pressed the muzzle against his enemy's forehead.

"Iii——gihhhhiiiiIIII!"

Next moment——it was the boy who screamed.

His muffled voice resounded throughout the dark forest road.

At the same time, the corpse held the boy's arm and laid him down on the ground.

The fluorescent light's blinking became more intense, the inside of the boy's head started to lose its way.

"Hii...hiiii...n-no... no... get out... d-don't enter... my h-head... d-don't... enter it!!"

The Boy's tongue moved without permission, moving around and not allowing him to articulate.

"I beg you...! Stop it...!!"

His cheeks spasmed and he could do nothing about it, he cried while laughing.

"No——impossible——wait a moment——stopp——"

His tone of voice changed. Against the boy's will, his mouth movements, and his thinking changed.

Tears spilled out from his eyelids, as if it was the boy's soul itself.

"Help——I can't——impossible——impossible——don't erase——doing your best, is it painful?"

With words that felt like a death sentence released from his mouth, the boy cried.

"NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO! ——Gyahaha!—— I don't want to disapeaaaaaaaaaaarrrr!——Gyahahahahaha! ——Uwaaaaaa! ——Gyahahahahahahaha! Mother——Gyahahahahahahahahahahahahahahahaha!"

His cries of agony were drowned out and laughter took over.

The boy's mouth distorted shaping an arc like the half-moon in the sky, and laughed.

The fluorescent light disappeared completely, and darkness took over. Although his laughter continued even in the darkness, at some point his laughter suddenly stopped.

He raised his body from the ground, and removed the sand which was stuck to his body. His behaviour looked natural, but it was different from before.

On his mouth, a smile reminiscent of a crescent moon remained.

"I wonder why humans call out for their mothers when they about to die."

He grit his teeth with disdain. His gestures were like that of a devil, as if something else resided in his body.

That's when the expression disappeared from the boy's face, and he turned towards the lush vegetation in the darkness.

In the darkness, there was a human silhouette. Dressed in pure while as if illuminating the darkness, a beautiful woman. Her foot was clearly detached from the ground, and she was suspended in the air.

"...ohh? Why are you in a place like this?"

The something that had entered the boy, called out to the woman.

She closed her eyes deeply, and moved closer to him by floating and without making a sound.

After the woman advanced forward, the leaves were blown in by the wind as if forming a carpet behind her. The fallen green leaves from the ground were blown into the air and changed into lush green leaves.

The scene made it seem as if the woman imparted life onto the dead leaves.

That appearance seemed to be full of compassion, worthy of being called a saint, it harbored incredible sanctity within.

When the woman reached 'that' she raised her face.

"Long time no see. Mephistopheles."

With a voice so clear and serene it was spine-chilling, the woman called 'it'.

The thing called Mephistopheles squinted for just a moment.

"What do the people from outside want now? If you are here to sight-see how I have my meal, I'll have you pay a fee. Mother Goose."

"Kuhihi." Mephisto laughed merrily.

The woman called Mother Goose looked at the body lying beside him. Knowing Mephisto's magic, she understood the tragedy that happened in this place, and opened her eyes wide.

Beautiful ruby-colored eyes glared at Mephisto.

"...how filthy. Even though I am a witch, I'm disgusted by you."

"Instead of judging me. Just give me the reason for your visit already."

Uncaring, Mephisto asked a question. Mother Goose immediately changed the topic.

"Both the Hero's assault and prevention of information leakage from Nikaido Mari failed."

"Yeah, I know. Who do you think I am."

"I'll be frank. This failure is not just Haunted's, but you are responsible for it as well."

Her voice was gentle, but the meaning of her words directly scolded him.

"Originally, it was arranged that you and Haunted prepare a strategy together. You were to create a disturbance, and Haunted was to assault... that's how it should have been."

"Oh, is that so."

"If you worked together it wouldn't have ended like that."

Hearing Mother Goose's voice, the vegetation that surrounded her started to move and rustle.

Mephisto understood the characteristics of Mother Goose, so when he saw the buzzing of trees, he knew she was incredibly upset.

"...there's no way I can work with that man. Although the way we fight is similar, but we ourselves are way too different. That man cannot understand my stance, and I am also disgusted by that man."

"Even so, that's not a reason to not contact headquarters and to disappear without a trace. My mission is to locate you, and to take you back to headquarters. Even if I have to use force to do that, it doesn't matter. Think of it as of punishment for abandoning your mission."

The trees rustled again, but Mephisto was still unfazed.

"Abandoned the mission?"

As the trees around were trembling, Mephisto showed a glimpse of his tongue between his lips.

"My work is ongoing without any problems."

"...what do you mean?"

"Releasing everyone from forbidden area... that's my mission, right?"

The two's line of sight met.

The fluorescent lamp came back to life silently, and started blinking. Mephisto's face was no longer visible as the shadow was dropped, and her figure was no longer visible. It was unclear now who it was.

"If you let me do as I please, I will crush Inquisition with my own two hands. Then you will be able to release witches that are trapped in there."

"............"

"I too, want to get back my body that's stored in there. Our interests are the same, and there's no reason to give up."

Hearing no pretense in these words, Mother Goose started to think.

"I'll show you... the way the one called Mephisto fights."

The witch called Mephistopheles, her existence itself was very vague.

Therefore, it was not registered as a specific risk in Inquisition's records. Just a rumor. A legend. A fairy tale. A legendary witch known to no one.

Mephisto. Not even she herself, knew her own identity.

* * *

Seelie's hospital ward was surrounded by white walls. Probably because of the acrid smell of chemicals, but Takeru didn't like this place.

Takeru walked through the white corridor while slightly nervous.

Since they were on campus, he was wearing his uniform. He held a bouquet of flowers in his hands.

"306... 306... oh."

After counting the rooms in the third hospital ward, he found his destination.

The room 306, from the time where they protected the school during the tournament attack, it was where Yoshimizu Akira's clone was hospitalized. Almost a month passed since then, but Akira didn't wake up yet.

He heard a clone's body was weaker than a normal one, but Takeru didn't know about the details.

*I wonder if Kyouya will come today as well...*

Just when he was about to knock on the room's door, he stopped for a moment.

According to what the Seelie at reception desk told him, Kyouya visited Akira's hospital room every day and looked at her until the day was over. When he came before Kyouya was hanging around Akira like that as well. Kyouya's belly was pierced by Haunted and he was trapped under a fallen tower after which he lost both of his legs.

Despite a heart-rending feeling embracing him, Takeru knocked on the hospital room's door.

The windows were open for ventilation, and the moment the door was opened, a pleasant breeze grazed his cheek.

A simple bed and clean sheets, curtain swayed in the wind. Nothing changed compared to when he came before.

"...eh?"

However, Akira was not there. There was no life-supporting machines there either. There was nothing there.

Kyouya wasn't there. It had completely turned into an empty room.

I wonder if her hospital room changed? Because he heard her condition settled down as compared to before, he thought of coming to visit, but seems like his timing was bad.

That's when there was an announcement coming from a wristwatch-type device to all students.

When he pressed a button on the small LCD screen, from a small projector a stereoscopic image emerged. He brought his eyes closer in wonder, and there was,

【"It's an emergency announcement from witch-hunting festival executive committee. This is to inform you that "Witch-Hunting festival" will be held. During the first period, there will be a student meeting held. All students are to come to the gymnasium at that time."】

"...witch-hunting festival...?"

Takeru tilted his head puzzled.

"Witch-Hunting festival" is a festival that used to be held in old Denmark, where people burned a scarecrow that was to resemble a witch, it looked like a ghastly event. Because witches used to be rampant at that time, a sense for things that acted like evil-warding amulets was strong.

It was currently the winter solstice, since the original one was performed during the summer solstice, it meant AntiMagic Academy only borrowed the name.

Its contents could be easily described as of a normal festival that could be held anywhere.

"——Everyone, I'm sorry to call you out so suddenly! This time, the witch-hunting festival which has been abolished for a long time will be carried out this year! It's a traditional event made for students, I want everyone to be pleased with it!"

Making a refreshing declaration from the stage, was AntiMagic Academy's witch-hunting festival executive chairman, Tenmyouji Reima.

Blond hair and blue eyes, refined features. A good young man with a refreshing smile who was popular with girls.

"Of course, there is a reason for it to be resumed. Recently, this school has been targeted by witches, everyone should be aware of that fact already. The press has already pointed out Inquisition's lack of a sense of crisis. There have been calling for amendment plans for a while now, but that voice has become stronger recently. However, I do not harbor any doubts about the way this school is functioning. I think it's only thanks to the senses honed through actual fighting that people are able to become inquisitors."

Reima sincerely, albeit a bit exaggeratedly spoke to the gathered students.

"Everyone probably thinks the same. It's unbearable to have our efforts denied. That's why I thought we should restore the event now. This traditional event used to be loved by this city's residents. In other words, umm, it's going to be an event that improves our image in the world... that's shallow thinking, I know, I don't mind if you laugh."

Reima smiled a bit embarrassed causing girls to raise their voices excited.

"For example it's like in normal schools, it's not bad right. How about it, everyone? Will you cooperate?"

Supporting his refreshing declaration, the female students cheered.

The reaction of the other students was not the best. It wasn't really caused by the fact that they were jealous of girls cheering on Reima, but by the fact they thought of the school festival as of a silly sideshow.

There were no points to earn like there was during the mock battle tournament, so it was obvious they won't be motivated. In the first place, the event was abolished three years prior because there was not enough students participating. Half of the students crowded in gymnasium had bitter expressions on their faces.

"Witch-Hunting festival... that's one unpleasant sounding name."

Said Mari who was standing on Takeru's right, just beside him.

Ikaruga who was on Takeru's left suddenly looked towards Mari while munching on a mint candy.

"Essentially, it's just a festival. It's no different from a festival in a normal school."

"Is that so? If you say it's a simple school festival, then I'm a bit interested. Though, I never experienced one."

Mari said that with a somewhat excited look on her face.

Takeru looked at Mari's expression. it changed as she calmed down, then she looked at the stage again.

"Isn't it rare for the student council to organize an event? Normally, it would be something the Student Council President or Chairman would plan?"

Ikaruga wondered as she took out the mint candy from her mouth.

"The president was too busy with the case of the raid on Alchemist and pulling the Dullahans around. And the Student Council President... Kusanagi should know already, right? That one would have definitely said something like a school festival is a pain in the ass."

"...I guess. But still, to think our school had a Witch-Hunting Festival executive committee. It's the first time I've seen that guy who's on the stage."

"If I'm not wrong, he's a student who came from the school's branch school last month. They say he was student council president over there, he must be using the Witch-Hunting Festival to raise his appeal. He has a despicable face, but doesn't he do more than the student council president?"

Being told that, Takeru who knew the personality of the current student council president smiled wryly.

AntiMagic Academy's student council president, Hoshijiro Nagaru. A second year. An incredibly short girl with fiery red hair, carefree, negligent and sloppy personality. A weirdo like the three of them.

She's been always narrowing her eyes nonchalantly and since she spoke to other students hatefully, for some reason they could no longer get motivated afterwards. She might have been a good person, but even from the unreliable Takeru's point of view she seemed unreliable, he didn't know why she was elected as the student council president.

However, some people referred to her as "Little Chairman", she was an existence feared by quite a few people. Takeru didn't know much about the circumstances surrounding her.

Remembering about the student council president, Ikaruga sighed and played with her hair.

"I'm not good with her, I never know what that type of person thinks."

"What's up with that, aversion for the same type?"

Mari said that with a half-smile.

"Everyone standing at the top of this school is rotten. From what I hear, that student council president person feels unreliable but... well, if it were someone stiff it would be not interesting. If a certain humble someone were to become the student council president, the school would have become extremely formal like the Japanese army before world war II〜."

After Mari said that, Ouka who stood on her right responded with a hit on Mari's solar plexus.

**obbuu*, Mari raised a pitiful scream and crouched.

"Who's stiff."

"...t-that...retort... was too tough...."

"It wasn't on purpose. Just a habit. Whenever I attack I aim for vital points."

"Didn't you clearly say "attack" now?! Don't aim for vital points! In the first place, don't attack people!"

"Shut up. I said already that it wasn't on purpose. Also, it's your fault for having a solar plexus in such a place."

"Over a million people have their solar plexus in the same place!!"

Like usual, the two started to (intensely) batter at each other, Takeru tried to appease them.

Somehow, recently he's been feeling like an animal breeder who's keeping mad dogs as well. Of course the relatively quiet Small Fry Platoon was drowned in screams from female students screaming because of Reima.

"What whaat, the only ones who are enthusiastic are first year girls? Well, I can understand your loss and gain philosophy. That's why! There are good news for those of you who want points. For this Witch-Hunting Festival there's a new idea which be a great new addition to it."

While everyone complained, Reima grinned.

Suddenly interested in the unexpected development all the students raised their faces.

Reima triumphantly pointed at the students and said in a loud voice.

"Make money! And if you donate that money to the school afterwards, you can get what you desire!"

The gymnasium reverberated with cheers from the students.

After removing the microphone from the stand Reima started to explain the new system.

A special system for Witch-Hunting Festival. Every platoon is going to host an event, during which they will be earning special currency from the visitors who come from outside. The more of the currency a platoon gathers, the more points they will get for the test platoon system.

The value of the special currency is equivalent to that of normal money. Special currency is used to prevent students from using their own money in exchange for points. And it's impossible to exchange the money other than doing it at the clearing house.

The exchange ratio is one point for a thousand of the currency. Fractions of that amount are not added to the points. In simpler terms, ten thousand was equivalent to that of an E-class Magical Heritage.

Of course, for veterans who already reached the promotion quota during the last six months, in consideration for them it was made possible to exchange the special currency for normal money.

The expenses are covered by the school. However preparation and sales are all to be done by students on their own.

"——There are no other rules! You can do anything as long as its not against the law! Enjoy yourselves! And obtain points! There will be no other event like this!"

Reima motivated the students.

Everyone was silenced, and not a single person was acting noisily now.

Just, there was an eerie fighting spirit, and their eyes were glowing like that of a leopard's at night, displaying their motivation.

So to speak, it was a very typical reaction for the students of this school. Getting points without platoon activities? Investigation and combat not necessary? No risk involved? Just making money?

———It's a godsend!

As everyone quietly readied themselves for the fight. Ikaruga shook her head and said.

"Good grief. That's refreshingly snobbish. As expected of a school system based on missions. They won't bite if there's no bait."

"But this way it's gotten more interesting～. Also, you guys results are in last place so you can use this opportunity to earn points. I'll help you out too～"

Mari said that and winked, but Ouka who was beside her had an unconvinced expression on her face.

"...you're useless when you cannot use magic."

"Haa? Even though I saved you before when you were fighting, you still say things like that? Also, in recognition to my assistance in taking care of the matter with Alchemist, the restriction on my usage of magic loosened, don't talk as if you didn't know that, all right?"

**ishishi** Mari moved her fist towards her mouth and laughed wickedly.

After that battle, Mari's Gleipnir was improved and she was able to use magic a little now. Even so, she wasn't able to release enough magical power to harm others and would explode immediately if she created an attack-oriented operative procedure without permission. The level of restriction was divided into five stages, and more powerful magic was allowed for every level of restriction released.

However. The ones who had the authority to release the limit were——

"Hmph, don't forget that if you try to use magic without my permission, your head will be blown off."

Just Ouka and the Chairman. Sougetsu trusted Ouka's sense of responsibility and her hate against the witches, and allowed her to release the restriction up to level two.

"Guhh... why is it you instead of Takeru...!"

"Because I won't hesitate to trigger the explosion."

"Don't make it explode!"

"I wonder just how far would the ignited fuel tank be blown away."

"Just how long are you going to use that nickname!"

Ignoring Mari's outrage, Ouka shook her head and sighed.

"Back to the topic, I don't agree with this Witch-Hunting Festival. The test platoon system is like a challenge that has to be cleared before becoming an Inquisitor. Getting points for money is counter-productive."

"Just how stiff are you. Maybe those annoyingly well-shaped breasts of yours are stone hard too?"

"Stop that mockery. You're a student of this school too, so you should drop that sloppy attitude. This is not a normal educational institution."

"I know. But for you there is no "later" right? Think of it as of a chance."

"That has nothing to do with you."

"It does! If you guys are not here——"

I'll be alone! Mari attempted to say and looked away with a blushing face.

Ikaruga glanced at her while grinning knowingly, Ouka also guessed what she meant and displayed a slightly troubled reaction.

"Anyway, rather than participating in the Witch-Hunting Festival, I think we'd better be off seriously doing some platoon activities. Kusanagi, as a captain, you think so too right?"

"————"

"............Kusanagi?"

Wondering why there was no reaction, Ouka looked at Takeru's face.

Suddenly——a chill ran down their spines.

And then, the one who was the most motivated and excited out of all people present, was Kusanagi Takeru.

"Ku-Kusanagi?"

Although Ouka tried to place a hand on his shoulder, she retracted her hand in response to the heat that was emanating from him. Even Mari stared at Kusanagi in shock.

Weird. They have never seen Takeru so motivated before.

"Kusanagi Double-Edged style initiate, Kusanagi Takeru. For personal reasons, I shall participate and do my best during this festival!"

Suddenly a war council was announced, the Small Fry Platoon members all gathered in the platoon room.

After everyone sat down on a sofa, Takeru said that with his arms crossed in front of his chest.

Because of this mysterious and abrupt declaration, Mari and Ouka whispered to each other while hiding behind the others.

"Hey heyy, why did Takeru blurt out a declaration befitting a battle scene?"

"No idea... his personality changes when he gets heated up but, why now... even if he wants points, he's much more motivated than usual."

"He really has a lot of mysteries... I know he has a little sister and he's poor, that's all. In the first place, what kind of swordsmanship is the Kusanagi Double-Edged style? I have no idea why he shouts the technique names in the middle of combat."

"! I've been also thinking about that. Maybe that's what he was taught to do, or maybe to raise his fighting spirit, or..."

"...or?"

"Maybe he simply shouts that because he thinks it sounds cool."

"No way, if its the latter than although it's a bit weird, it's also quite cute."

While the two of them whispered to each other in secret from Takeru, Ikaruga put a mint candy in her mouth explained the mystery to the two.

"Let's put the technique name aside, the reason he's going berserk right now is money, mo-ne-y."

Both Mari and Ouka frowned.

""Money?'"

"That's right. This guy is living alone, aside from his little sister, he's alone, and there seems to be a debt his parents left behind. He's being chased by debt collectors often, and had to flee to this school."

"I knew he was poor but... other than that, this is news to me. So he's that poor."

Ouka looked at Takeru with sympathy.

"I was poor as well so I can understand his feelings, even so, this is..."

Mari glanced at Takeru who was practically burning.

"The special currency can be converted to normal money, and he can use that money. That must've been what winded him up. Kusanagi right now is a money monger."

"You mean... Takeru is... super stingy with money?"

"He's incredibly stingy. But only when it comes to himself. Nikaido, if you are to ask him to go with you on a date, prepare to split the bill. Make sure not to have him pay for you even by mistake. If he were to treat you... imagine him make an expression as if he was to vomit blood."

Hearing the word "date", Mari blushed.

"I-I didn't even think of having Takeru treat me. I can pay for my half okay? I... umm... I'd be happy just with going on a date with him."

"You really are a shallow pettanko."

"Adding "pettanko" was unnecessary!!"

As usual, the trio was noisy but then, **donn*, Takeru hit the table with both of his hands causing them to turn towards him in amazement.

"Listen you three, this time the Witch-Hunting Festival is no joke. We need to brace ourselves and do our best. We need to properly think of a plan. As soon as the initial draft is determined, we need to make a list of goods and materials to procure. Depending on what we think of, we might have to prepare and reserve a free classroom, that's why we need to carry it out as soon as possible. The location is most important when you open a store."

"""............"""

"We certainly are incredibly clumsy, however, business should be out of the others' specialty as well... it's definitely an opportunity. Although I'm bad at it, I am accustomed to customer service because of a part-time job at a convenience store. I should be able to teach you what to do. Let's do it... let's take over the world!"

"K-Kusanagi is speaking like a captain...!"

"Scary...! Takeru actually sounds like a captain...!"

Everyone was taken aback.

Takeru was so motivated, it seemed very creepy.

"Gonna do it... I'm gonna do it. I'll do anything to win! I'll carry this burden... and not half, but everything, I'll carry it all! If anyone is unhappy if we win, I... I——I won't hesitate to use witch hunter form!"

"Nonono stop! Stop, don't go there! Why would you use the witch hunter form at a school festival?!"

"It's useless. He's not listening at all. And his eyes are sparkling..."

Both Mari and Ouka were in shock because of his drastic change.

However, Ikaruga saw it before, and she was familiar with Takeru who was like this. She knew that he would still turn back to normal if he's rebuked.

"Kusanagi. Before we make money, we need to get enough points to reach the quota. Or maybe you want to throw our future away for money?"

Ikaruga said it calmly, with an absent-minded expression.

Takeru was weak when facing the sense of responsibility for the other three. The heat evaporates from Takeru's body, and his eyes that glowed red also momentarily turn back to normal.

He returned to normal, and sweat appeared on his temples. Takeru had a difficult expression on his face, putting his hand on his chin. But after a few seconds he heated up again.

"Don't worry. There's 120 points remaining——in other words, we need to earn hundred and twenty thousand. In other words, we can split everything we earn above that sum equally between us!"

Berserk. He was positive in vain.

"Do you know just how hard it would be to make hundred and twenty thousand in one day～?"

Ikaruga responded with a decent question, but Takeru responded with a fearless and evil smile.

"It's difficult but not impossible. Suginami, you've missed something important."

"?"

"During this Witch-Hunting Festival, you can ally yourself with other platoons right? If for example everyone in the group earns two hundred thousand, it's mechanism that adds to the points of all platoons that worked together. This is the opportunity we can use———there is no way I would have missed it!"

Takeru pointed at Ikaruga showing his spirit, as if he outwitted a formidable enemy.

However, there was no change in Ikaruga's expression, as if she was daydreaming, she opened her mouth slowly.

"So, which platoon do you want to partner with?"

"———?!"

"Of course there is permission for doing joint platoon activities. However those points are divided between platoons. And you didn't think of that plan up until now right? But even if you still want to team up. There is no one we can partner with."

"…………"

"Or maybe you have some connections? Because I don't."

Takeru moved his gaze away from Ikaruga, and stared at Ouka.

Of course she shook her head, although she was popular among the girls in the class, but because she was stiff and had a bitter atmosphere around her making it hard to approach her, she didn't have any friends.

Next was Mari. She made a bitter smile and raised her hands. Of course. With a premise of being a witch, and the fact that she didn't attend school for long yet. Her acquaintances were only the platoon members.

And Takeru himself, was out of question. The girls were scared by his scary eyes that seemed like that of a murderer, and thought of him as of a weirdo who has a sword hanging on his waist. On the other hand, not only was he thought of for having a scary appearance, but people were also jealous of the fact that all his platoon members were female, and all of them had above average specs.

He had no friends, and the only ones whom he talked with; Kyouya and Akira were in hospital.

**pshoo*, Takeru's fighting spirit was quenched like fire being splashed with a bucket of water. It deflated like a balloon before disappearing.

"Sorry... somehow I... was lost in dreams... sorry..."

Takeru went to the corner of the room and curled up holding his knees.

"That's a really amazing slump. Even though he was so frantic, he's like a dried potato now."

"Ta-Takeru... it's not a bad thing that you were motivated, okay? Let's do our best like normally you know, normally."

Mari approached him timidly and rubbed Takeru's back to comfort him.

"Sorry everyone... I'm no good as a captain... the fact that I got heated up by a short-term benefit makes me disqualified as a captain... haha, I'm really an idiot..."

Both Ouka and Mari and murmured "this guy is so troublesome".

"..........."

Usagi finished the examination of her injured eye, and heard a voice from the other side of platoon's room door, she didn't move. Although it usually was a noisy place, this time it felt strangely far away.

It seemed like there was no problems even if she wasn't there.

The Small Fry Platoon would work even without her.

These were the thoughts that appeared in her head.

She didn't think of things like that too often. Even among the Small Fry Platoon she was no good. During the previous battle, she thought of herself as the one pulling everyone else's legs. She, a sniper who was a decisive factor, risked everyone's lives. It's not that she felt bad. She didn't feel apologetic. But even Usagi could feel responsibility. That's why when she remembered the fear and tension she felt at the battlefield, she considered it a failure.

She thought that one day they will say "you are not needed".

The same way her own parents did.

Usagi was always afraid of that.

This was the only place she could stay at. The only place she didn't want to lose.

That's why up until now, she clung desperately trying to keep up with everyone.

And yet...

*...it seems... like there's no need... for me to cling to it any longer...*

Usagi narrowed her eyes and raised her hand.

*...what kind of expression should I have when I enter.*

And what kind of face should she make, when she tells everyone about quitting school. She didn't know.

Even so, she forced herself and put a hand on the doorknob.

『"Sorry, it seems like I tripped. Oh right, Is Usagi not done yet?"』

『"It seems like her eye injury is still lingering. It's best if its cured properly. Details aside, the sniper is a cornerstone of our platoon. Saionji's eyes are also our eyes."』

Hearing her own name in the conversation among the platoon members, Usagi's movement stopped again.

*At a time like this... don't say things that will make me happy.*

If she's told that she's needed, she will be happy. And at the same time, she felt painful.

『"We need her for the Witch-Hunting Festival too. Did you know? That girl is unexpectedly popular with boys. No matter what we host, she'll bring in customers. Those looks of hers have a high fighting potential."』

"......nn?

Contrary to the deep emotions within Usagi, the flow of the conversation turned suspicious and Usagi noticed.

『"Ahh, Usagi-chan is really cute〜. Rather than a rabbit, she's more like a puppy. Somehow she has that... 'bully me' aura around her right? When her eyes become watery, it's incredibly thrilling."』

『"Mari... you..."』

『"Ehh?! Takeru doesn't think so?! No way?!"』

............*eh?*

『"Haa... I know there is a pervert muffler here."』

『"Stop giving me weird nicknames every time!"』

『"If it's "bully me" aura, then Nikaido has it too. It seems like you would die if you were left alone."』

『"I'll thrust that mint candy up your nose?!"』

..................

『"...I was reminded that Usagi hates being called by her first name. But to me, that headband really looks like rabbit ears... it's really, umm, I think it's cute."』

『"Ooh. It's rare for Ootori to call something 'cute'."』

『"Mmm. Even I have minimum of sensitivity as a woman. Don't make fun of me."』

『"That's not convincing when it's said by a tasteless woman who only eats anpan〜"』

『"——What do you know about anpan!"』

『"You snap because of that?! Don't pull my mufflerr!"』

『"But now that you say it. I wonder why is she wearing that rabbit-like headband."』

『"Ufufu you really don't understand, Kusanagi. That girl actually likes being called 'Usagi-chan'. She continues to say 'don't don't', because she can't be honest. Ufufu, that girl."』

『"She's turned into a pervert completely... but really, she wants to be called 'Usagi-chan'. All right, I won't refrain from doing that any more. I'll call her Usagi-chan from now on!"』

...**bam**

"I won't ever allow you to call me that way, you rotten oranges——!!"

She was stupid to indulge in deep emotions, Usagi opened the doors with a great momentum as anger surged in her.

Inside, were the platoon members enjoying tea and biscuits as usual.

No one showed any surprise, and just stared at Usagi with mouths full of biscuits.

"Yo, welcome back, Usa-chan."

"Welcome back〜Usa〜chan."

"You're late. Welcome back, my mistress Usa."

"?! W-welcome back, U...Usa-chan?"

At full strength, everyone called Usagi like that. She was happy, but also pissed.

"Khhhhhiiiiiiii I told you not to call me that! Are you doing it on purpose or are you bird brains?! Did you realize that I overheard you?! Even though you know my feelings about it you laugh behind my back! Ootori, stop trying to read the mood, it's impossible for you!"

"No... I tried to read the mood but... h-how was it?"

"It's not 'how was it'!! It's fine if you don't read the mood in here!"

After she was yelled at by trembling Usagi, she said "So it's no good again..." and slumped.

Usagi's tone of voice returned to normal, and she placed a hand on her hip.

"Good grief, good grief!! This headband is a keepsake from my grandmother. Stop making fun of me."

"Well it's not like we were making fun of you. We just said that it looks good on you. Kusanagi thinks so too, right?"

Although Ikaruga suddenly passed the ball to him, Takeru immediately nodded.

"Yeah. I think it's really cute. It suits you."

Takeru stared straight at Usagi and said it with a smile.

Usagi was frozen stiff.

"Cc-c-cu... suddenly... what you... all of a..."

Feeling her cheeks turn red in no time, Usagi put her hands on them.

Why does this man always blurts out such things without any ulterior motives. Takeru was an incredibly honest person, and although she was happy about his praise, she wasn't accustomed to being praised and was incredibly embarrassed.

"Hm? Eh? I don't really have any ulterior motives. That's what I honestly think."

"Yes, thank you for the treat～"

"Suginami, what? What treat?'

""…………""

"The two of you as well, why are you glaring at me?"

""Nothing really, I'm already used to it.""

Ikaruga was grinning, Mari and Ouka sipped tea, discouraged.

Usagi couldn't hide her agitation, and peaked out from behind both of her hands.

Yeah, why does it always turn out like this.

Whenever she's here, it feels like being discouraged is foolish.

"…………"

Unlike before, she didn't feel any distance at all. This place was so close.

Usagi thought again and decided not to talk about leaving the school till the very last moment.

There was still a bit more time. And if possible, she wanted to spend it having fun until that date.

*It won't be much longer… but a little more, just like usual, as it is now.*

Usagi thought of it as important and narrowed her eyes, and stood in front of the others as the usual Saionji Usagi.

"Ehem! Being called cute is fine. Weren't you guys having a war council for the Witch-Hunting festival? Seriously, why do you always divert the topic and it becomes a worthless chatter. Really, if I'm not here you are no good——"

——Without. Just when she was about to say that, a hand was placed on Usagi's shoulder.

"Excuse me. I'll take a moment."

When they looked behind, there was a strange female student there.

She wasn't alone, there were two other students in the back behind her.

"Did something happen?"

"…is the Captain here?"

The female student entered the platoon room and stood in front of Takeru.

"I'm sorry for being abrupt, we're the twenty-third test platoon. Sorry for being straightforward, but we want to consult with you about the Witch-Hunting Festival."

Being told that they want to consult Takeru his dropped his shoulders in wonder.

The schoolgirl looked towards him seriously, and after raising her eyebrows she said in a heavy voice.

"Won't you——form alliance with us?"

It was a surprising proposal for the Small Fry Platoon.

# Chapter 2 - Dropout Alliance

Speaking about hopeless.

The 23rd platoon which had entered the 35th's test platoon's room had similar circumstances to the Small Fry Platoon, and their platoon consisted of three members. The three others were either missing or gave up on school because of injuries or circumstances in their homes. They couldn't hold any satisfactory activities and were the third worst in the rankings.

It wasn't just the 23rd platoon, the 8th platoon was there as well as the 42nd who had low performance for similar reasons. It seemed like they teamed up and prepared an alliance making effective use of the rules of Witch-Hunting festival.

And they proposed that the Small Fry Platoon also joins them.

"Thank you for coming. Welcome, our dark horse."

A honor student boy with glasses rest a hand on his chin and said so to the Small Fry Platoon members.

It seemed like he was the one who organized the alliance.

In front of him, was a plate on which it was written "Dropout Alliance Interim Leader".

*Dropout Alliance...*

The fact they wrote that about themselves made Takeru feel some familiarity with them.

The interim leader placed his hands on the desk and stood up slowly, his eyes shone as he faced all the dropouts who gathered.

"Now then, as you might already know, we are at the very bottom of this school."

"...acting self-deprecating from the get go."

A female student from the 23rd test platoon said so loudly.

"It's not acting self-deprecating. It's a fact. We need to accept reality."

The leader emphasized it by raising his fist, the other members couldn't really deny it.

Takeru also lost the fighting spirit from a while ago and completely regained composure. As if he was dust in the corner of the room, he sat down on the chair that was prepared for him.

"Therefore, don't you think this Witch-Hunting festival is a chance? We have the manpower... we have wisdom... and... we have those beauties! There's no way we will lose!"

**swish**, the interim leader pointed towards the Small Fry Platoon (girls).

Beauties. Certainly, the Small Fry Platoon's female members looks were on a high level. Although the girls themselves gave bad impressions in school, they looked so good they were eye-catching just by walking in the city.

However, what did that have to do with Witch-Hunting festival.

"I see."

Ikaruga who was sitting cross-legged on her chair shook her head.

"So you want us to join alliance with that as your motive? Wanting us to attract guests as salesgirls."

As she said that, interim leader was startled and his shoulders trembled.

They tried to recruit the Small Fry Platoon so that they could use its female members. The Small Fry Platoon wasn't invited out of charity, there was a reason for that.

The member's faces immediately displayed annoyed expressions.

Only Ikaruga responded to the interim leader looking relaxed.

"There are those people who use popular voice actors and cosplayers as salesgirls. That attitude of people wanting to do anything to sell... I don't hate it."

...Takeru and the others had no idea what was she talking about.

However both interim leader and Ikaruga nodded strongly as if confirming something with each other.

"——However."

After sympathizing with him for a moment, Ikaruga loudly placed her leg on the desk, acting full of herself.

"If you want to use our girls, I take it you are prepared accordingly? Even our rotten test platoon... will not help you out if there's nothing in it for us, we're not suckers who will trust you out of desperation you know?"

While putting a mint candy between her fingers as if it was a tobacco Ikaruga said that, her eyes looked like that of a salesman.

As a tense atmosphere drifted in the air, the other Small Fry Platoon members whispered to each other in the back.

"...is it just my imagination or did Suginami's weird switch get turned on?"

"She seems like a manager in charge of idols... she seems to be in charge now."

"This is not good... Suginami plays really dirty when she's like that."

"I don't know a Suginami who doesn't play dirty..."

As Takeru naturally mixed into their conversation, Ouka made an unhappy face.

"Kusanagi, you are the captain. You should be the one negotiating with other platoons, what are you doing by sitting leisurely."

"Sitting like this all this time is uncomfortable. That's right Takeru, you should be the one to take charge here as the captain."

"That is right. If you leave it to Suginami, who knows what we will be forced to do."

**girori**, everyone's stares were directed towards Takeru.

And he averted his face immediately.

"No... I... I'm no good with this kind of atmosphere."

"Don't act like a coward. While I don't agree with this Witch-Hunting festival's system, but this is a good opportunity to prove ourselves. A chance to improve communication between us."

"Although it's not something the one who lacks communication skills the most should say... I also think we shouldn't leave all cooperation matters to Suginami and this awkward atmosphere. We need look forward to future and work together to build a harmonious relationship don't we? Usagi-chan thinks so too, right?"

Asked for support, Usagi was confused.

"I-in the future?"

"? The one who tried the most is Usagi-chan. There's only a few months left so we need to earn points, don't we?"

Usagi went silent and looked down below.

"I...I don't care about... anyone other than platoon members... above all... I want memories——"

When Usagi was about to say it, the alliance meeting status has suddenly changed.

The interim leader raised his voice.

"Impossible! The Witch-Hunting festival is an important battle! We need to develop a game plan that uses everyone's strength to the fullest! Why do you think we made this alliance for?!"

Ikaruga plunged him into despair, the Small Fry Platoon members who didn't hear tall of it started to pay attention. Ikaruga crossed her arms and smiled mockingly.

"No matter how many small fries gather——your ideas are still that of a small fry!"

The members of the other platoons had a bitter look on their faces, Takeru and the others also thought of the same thing.

*(((Even though your ideas are always the worst...)))*

They knew just how ridiculous were Ikaruga's ideas, so they wanted to retort. But Ikaruga forced it through anyway.

"In that aspect, I have both ability and confidence that will allow us to succeed. Leave this entire project to me. In fact I am a death dealer, an ex-Alc... a... a business woman."

She almost uttered a top secret fact but managed to cover it up

"That won't do. We have too much pride to do that. We cannot let you take initiative alone. Suginami-kun... even if you are the captain of the Small Fry Platoon the same as me."

The interim leader raised an objection to Ikaruga's proposal with a serious face.

Takeru agreed with his opinion as well.

*Yeah yeah, that's right... eh?*

He caught on something, and stopped thinking for a moment before looking into Ikaruga's eyes.

The name plate that was placed in front of the participants.

The plate that was placed in front of Ikaruga had written on it 'Small Fry Platoon Captain'.

Takeru sneakily crouched and moved towards Ikaruga like those people who go to the toilet during a movie.

"...U-umm... Suginami-san... when did you become our captain?"

"I don't know. Since they placed it in front of me, I acted like so."

"If you noticed, then don't act like one..."

"Can Kusanagi finalize this alliance?"

"If you say that I cannot refute, but why are you so motivated...?"

"Motivated? Does it look like that? That's your imagination right?"

That's what Ikaruga said, but her eyes were sparkling like that of a young girl.

"Ufu, ufufufu, I'll take over this alliance... I'll be able to do things I couldn't, I'll do all of it... there will be no mercy... ufufuhi...uhihehehe."

Correction. Her eyes were shining like those of a beast.

After that, neither Takeru nor the other platoons could do anything, and it's needless to say that the alliance was hijacked by Ikaruga.

Planning in progress, by Suginami Ikaruga.

With just that, it was clear that something will happen.

"...I apologize, it shouldn't have turned out like that."

Takeru received a note from the 23rd platoon's captain and apologized in the broad hallway.

It was a memo on which Ikaruga wrote as she planned, written on it were the necessary materials. It was Takeru's role to go out and buy the things listed on the memo. Other members also went out separately.

Mentioned on the memo were things like cloth, sewing set——things like cat ears, swimsuits, maid outfits.

*............isn't it all her hobbies. She's definitely intending to run a cosplay café.*

He could roughly tell what she was planning now.

"There's no need for Kusanagi-kun to apologize. I have to apologize instead. I thought that girl in the white coat was the captain ... and told that to the interim leader, it's because of me... sorry..."

As she said there's no need to mind it, Takeru lamented his own lack of presence.

He calmed his heart and returned to the conversation about the Witch-Hunting festival.

"But all of the guys in the alliance want points... although it is like that, it's not a good idea to leave it to Suginami."

"Yup, well we don't know much about such mundane hobbies and festivals. Since we attended normal elementary and middle schools, we don't have any confidence at this type of event. That's why having a person like that who will pull people in, is a good result for us."

"A-ahaha... you... might be right."

He felt as if he was told he wasn't a type that could pull people in, and his wounds deepened.

**pon pon** Ouka who stood behind him rubbed his back comforting him.

"Speaking of which, it's the first time for me to speak with Ootori-san. I've heard a lot of rumors about you. I'm the captain of the 23rd platoon, my name's Ishida. Just like Kusanagi-kun, I wasn't the captain at first."

Nice to meet you, and with that she held out her hand to Ouka.

Following her, were the two in the back "I'm Minami—" "I'm Minagawa—" who extended their hands.

Ouka was embarrassed and glanced at Takeru looking for help, but he pretended not to notice it.

After wiping her sweaty hand with hem of her skirt, she finally held Ishida's hand.

"N-nice to meet hyu."

She bit her tongue. She had a stiff facial expression and her movements were like that of a robot.

"A-ahaha. Ootori-san is really cute. You have a bit cool image."

"Right—. She had an aura that made it difficult to approach before, but after talking it's surprisingly different. If possible, could you tell us stories about the time when you worked as a Dullahan? I really want to hear it."

"Umm, eh! I've been curious about it for a while, you have a really beautiful hair, is that your natural color? What treatment do you use?"

After being approached by the three students, Ouka was flustered. Seeing that Takeru laughed in secret.

Not yet, it seems like she still didn't know how to communicate with people other than the Small Fry Platoon members.

He thought it was charming. Ouka who was living a bloody life, talking like this with students other than her own platoon's members. It was a valuable sight.

*The school festival might be a good opportunity...*

Test platoons were originally rivals who competed for points. Cooperation was only a temporary thing. They worked together to make something and their combat skills were unimportant unlike during the platoon activities. It felt like there was no wall between them.

Even as he walked down the hallway, he felt an unusual atmosphere.

Everyone was desperate for points like usual, they ran around and decorated the classrooms. But an innocence that suited their age could be felt.

Although they lived their school life while facing death daily, they were still teenagers.

Rather a desperate joint struggle, it was more like a harmonious collaboration that came out nicely,

"Shit! It's a sabotage from a different platoon! All of the equipment is broken!"

"...the 53rd platoon's stall suffered! Hurry up and order fresh cream! Buy it all out! Don't let others do it before you!"

Intelligence members were in charge of gathering information about other students in the festival! The vanguard left to distribute leaflets in the city! Maintenance members were in charge of decorating the classrooms! They didn't turn off the switches of their intercoms and reported all the time!

"No way...! Even though we managed to occupy the gymnasium after all this trouble, the popular idol said its a NG...?! When it comes to singing, we...!"

Is what he thought, but after taking a closer look, it seems like a he was surrounded by enemies.

"They're so desperate it's surreal..."

"It's a natural result of AntiMagic Academy's merit system. I also agree that awarding points for this is wrong."

Ouka ran away from the barrage of questions, she crossed hands in front of her and said something that sounded like it came from a class-committee member.

"Well, since we're already doing it, let's enjoy it. We've been only doing dangerous things recently, so we need to take a breather as well."

Takeru said so soothingly, but Ouka had an unpleasant expression on her face.

"I'm not going to change my mind. I have no intention of being convinced, but I'll do my best."

"...you really hate admitting defeat."

"We have no time to bother about appearances right? At this rate you won't be able to advance to second year, are you fine with the 35th platoon dismantling? I'm not."

"...ooh..."

Ouka realized what she said and looked away.

Takeru looked forward happily with a big smile on his face.

"You're right. Yeah. At this rate I won't be able to stay together with you guys. That'd be troubling. I don't want that either."

"What! Why do you have such a happy expression on your face! I'm doing this so that I can return to Dullahan again——"

"I know. I didn't say anything about that right?"

As Takeru turned his smiling face towards him, Ouka tried to hide her own face with bangs.

He wondered if he teased her too much, and reflected on it. But Takeru was very happy that Ouka thought of the platoon as something important.

"A-anyway, let's do it seriously. I need to go out to town quickly. I need to make it before other guys buy out the things."

He covered it up lightly and took out the note from his pocket.

That's when the ringtone of Ouka's phone rang out.

Ouka took out her cellphone and opened what seemed to be an e-mail.

"...sorry, Kusanagi. I've been called out. Can I ask you to take care of my share of shopping?"

"? I don't really mind. Who's calling you? The Chairman is now on a long-term business trip taking care of the Alchemist case. And you don't have any leftover contact with people from Dullahan..."

"No, it's a call from the student council."

She herself had a questioning look as she closed her phone.

Student council? Why were they calling Ouka?

"...well, it's not that strange. I've been invited to the student council before."

"To the student council? You?"

"I'm an ex-Dullahan and the Chairman's daughter, they think I have potential."

"Isn't that awesome, it's a quick road to promotion."

Takeru raised a voice of admiration.

AntiMagic Academy's student council.

There are student council elections every year, only excellent people can be listed as candidates, but the student council was a bit different from the ones at normal schools.

AntiMagic Academy's student council is a special test platoon. Originally platoons are separated by years, but student council was a special case that underwent curriculum of all grades at once.

First year's needed 200 points, second years needed 300 points and third years needed 400 points. The student council couldn't promote until they gathered 1000 points. In exchange, only the student council could undertake missions of B-class risk.

They organize school events, order the equipment test platoons need, and they are the ones to judge whether a platoon can undertake chosen mission. Since the Chairman is responsible for the entire Inquisition, it's the student council who organizes a majority of the school events. Entering the student council is the quickest way to become one of the upper echelons of Inquisition, it's said that it produced many excellent Inquisitors up to this date.

"I'm not interested in promotion. That's because higher-ups cannot take part in investigation. You guys know what my goal is, I still haven't given up on it."

Ouka narrowed her eyes, there was darkness dwelling inside of her pupils.

Her goal was to hunt down the witch who killed her family. She won't be satisfied unless she kills that witch with her own hands. If she becomes one of higher-ups, she won't be able to perform investigations. That's why she had no interest in promotion.

Revenge. Takeru too, was once at the mercy of negative feelings. However, he no longer was being controlled by his feelings. That's because he was aware that there was something else he had to do.

That's why, he had no intention of denying Ouka her revenge.

'Nothing good comes from revenge'. Takeru genuinely hated that saying.

But he agreed that there's no salvation for someone bound only by revenge.

That's why he decided to be by her side, and shoulder half of it.

So that when everything is over, she doesn't become an empty shell.

Takeru stood still, and Ouka pushed forward.

Even though that was the difference between the two of them, they still clumsily moved together.

"Also... if I entered the student council, I would quit our platoon."

"Nn? Did you say something?"

"I-its nothing! A-anyway, I'm going. I leave my share of shopping to you! Do your best in my stead!"

Ouka hit Takeru's shoulder and ran away from the spot.

Takeru looked at her back with a wry smile, and glanced at the memo he was given.

It was 2 pm, the middle of Witch-Hunting festival preparation.

Although it was voluntary, the majority of the students rushed the preparations for this Witch-Hunting Festival.

It was evening, the students were running restlessly under the orange dyed sky. Usagi who was in charge of collecting information and was touring the campus, checking on the stores prepared by other platoons.

"I didn't intend on becoming a Banshee..."

With a disgruntled expression she walked through the courtyard with a notepad in one hand.

As she looked around, there were some people on the courtyard planning with just their own platoon, and the places where several platoons were aiming for something bigger jointly.

There were some classic festival stalls like crepes and fried noodles stalls.

But there was also an exhibition of a self-made Dragoon, a stall with air-guns built with authentic anti-magic materials, books about anti-magic measures, accessories made with processed anti-magic material and training grounds where you could experience real combat exercises. That was the savage part of the festival.

Rather than ignorance of the outside world, it gave an impression of being from another world.

"The only one who would be happy with such a thing would only be a military geek like Suginami."

Usagi shook her head and sighed.

"...haa."

She put the investigation on hold and sat down on a bench in the courtyard.

While looking at the students dyed by colors of the sunset, she blanked out for a moment.

Everyone was desperate, but this time for a change they looked like they were having fun.

It felt like an infinitely distant scene. She's been desiring to see this scene of people having fun ever since she was in middle school. When she was in middle school, she was always alone. Although the cause of that was quite complex, but mainly it was because of her position in Saionji house that was like shackles to her.

As not to stain the name of Saionji, she put a lot of effort but with no results and yet boasted of the Saionji name. It was natural that others laughed at her and distanced themselves if she was like that.

Saying it wasn't hard, would be a lie.

For her ordinary self, the name of Saionji was too heavy.

"..........."

After she entered the high school and joined the 35th platoon, the lonely feeling of it being a distant scenery was lost.

"...I can't... return to those days... again."

She looked up at the sky, and recalled it.

The feeling as if she was being crushed by those days. The pain that felt like she was dying.

When she thought of that pain that slowly eroded her heart which awaited her again, she sank in despair.

"............hmph!"

In order to shake off the feeling she was sinking into, Usagi hit her cheeks with both of her hands.

She cannot do that. It was the Witch-Hunting festival after all. Before she quits school, she could make some fun memories.

Usagi got fired up and stand up from the bench.

But when she tried to raise her body, there was someone standing in front of her and she ended up pressing her face against that person.

"Ah... I-I apologize. I spaced out."

Wanting to apologize, she raised her head in a hurry.

The moment she raised her face, Usagi froze.

Although the other person's face couldn't be visible because it was in the shadow of the setting sun, fear still sprung up in Usagi.

"Ohh, it's been a while. Usagi."

The boy smiled gently.

Very delicate for a man, long blonde bangs. He had refined features and jade-colored clear pupils.

And a smile full of kindness Usagi would never forget.

Tenmyouji Reima. Witch-Hunting festival executive committee chairman and son of the current ethics committee chairman.

Usagi's childhood friend, the man who was her fiancée.

"Re...ima...-sama..."

"Hey hey, spare me the '-sama'. I don't mind if you call me without honorific like in the old days. Sorry for not visiting you recently. I had to leave the town, it's the first time we meet after a few years. Think I grew taller a bit?"

He placed a hand on her head and stroked it.

That gesture was full of affection. It was overflowing with tenderness.

However, that moment a chill ran down Usagi's spine.

She recalled memories of the past. The moment when she was shackled, the evening of that day.

The memory of how her heart was scarred, revived.

Usagi's body turned stiff, and she was unable to move. Her mouth trembled and her teeth chattered. Reima saw Usagi solidify, and looked into her face curiously.

"H...hey, are you scared?"

"N-o... that's not..."

"Can it be, that you are still bothered about what happened when we were children?"

As Reima asked, Usagi looked down.

"...at that time I was just a brat, and there was a lot happening in my house... I said something really horribly to you back then."

"...nhh...uu."

"But, I have matured. I'm different from how I was back then. I won't say anything that could hurt what's important to me ever again."

He bent his knee and looked into Usagi's eyes as he said that.

"How's your school life? This school's pretty difficult. When I heard you enrolled in AntiMagic Academy I was really worried. I was anxiously thinking you might become damaged goods."

Reima lifted her chin and forcibly made her face him.

Usagi's face was distorted by fear.

"...hiiii...hii....!"

"Don't worry. There's no need for you to stay in such a dangerous place any longer. You no longer need to do your best, Usagi."

"...uu...aaA..."

Usagi's trembling reached its peak, and her knees gave out.

Unable to stand any longer, she was about to collapse.

Reima supported her body and approached her face from the front.

"I've transferred schools to come here last month. Were you surprised?"

"....nhh....uuuu..."

"In fact, it seems like the Saionji household is in a troublesome position. Your parents said that I should transfer over. Mother was really thrilled. That's great, isn't it. That your mother is happy."

"———!"

"From now onward we'll be together forever."

Reima's fingertips touched Usagi's cheek, and gently stroked her lips.

On the other hand, Usagi's face displayed despair, and she could only tremble.

The trauma that has been engraved on her, the cause of her complex, her heart creaked.

That's when,

"——Usagi?"

Takeru who was carrying large luggage called out to her.

Seeing the state Usagi was in, Takeru looked at Reima puzzled. Reima released his hand from Usagi immediately and faced Takeru.

"Umm... Usagi's acquaintance?"

Takeru confirmed Reima's emblem which signified he was a second year, and asked Usagi.

Usagi didn't answer, without giving an answer she looked below.

Noticing the strange atmosphere, Takeru walked in front of Usagi and faced Reima.

"...? You are... the Witch-Hunting festival executive committee's..."

Takeru glared lightly at Reima, on the other hand Reima,

"Oh! Can it be that you're captain of the platoon Usagi is in?"

He hit his hand and looked at Takeru with a cheerful face.

Takeru on the other hand flinched.

"...y-yes. That's... right."

"I've heard about you. It seems like Usagi has been under your care this entire time. I'm Tenmyouji Reima. You probably know me because of this morning speech right."

Without any caution, Reima held out his hand towards him.

Takeru was puzzled and caught off guard, so he shook Reima's hand reflexively.

"I'm Usagi's relative... or rather, more like a childhood friend. Think of us as siblings."

"Is that so. Now that you say it, you're a bit..."

Looking at his hair color, Takeru thought they were a bit similar.

"This hair? The ancestors of both Tenmyouji and Saionji were Nordic. Not many Nordic people moved to this place, but blonde hair really stands out."

As Reima said, there weren't many people with blonde hair in this land. The blood of people who ran away from the places scarred by war and from the Akashic Hazard mixed, and even though boundary between races almost disappeared, the black hair which was the most frequent in old Japan was still most frequently seen.

"No, I think it looks really good. It fits you."

"...you say such things to other men? I'm happy but it's complex feeling..."

"No! I don't mean it in that sense!"

After that was said, Takeru was confused again.

And Reima hit Takeru's shoulder while laughing cheerfully.

"It's a joke, don't take it seriously. You're really an honest guy."

"Apologies..."

"Sorry about that, I'm really relieved. If you're a person like that, then I can leave Usagi to you."

"......?"

"Although it won't be long, I leave Usagi to you. It's my precious thing after all."

Reima smiled gently.

That's when the hem of Takeru's uniform was squeezed and pulled from behind.

"...Usagi."

He tried to turn around but stopped when he saw Usagi's hand grab his uniform.

It was shaking.

"What is it, Usagi?"

"...aa, nno..."

She uttered the words under her breath and her hand grabbing his clothes wouldn't let go.

Takeru felt it was not normal, and Reima bowed his head thanking him.

"Sorry, it looks like she doesn't feel too good. I'll take her to infirmary, is that fine?"

"I-is that so Usagi?! Then let me help you out."

The moment Reima offered to help, Takeru's clothes were pulled with more strength.

"Aah... no, you must be busy with the executive committee, I'll do it."

"Is that so? Well, festival organizers are busy. Then, I leave Usagi to you. Okay?"

"Yes, let's go to infirmary right away."

"Let's have a nice talk later, let me treat you in the cafeteria next time."

After saying that in a friendly manner and starting at Usagi worriedly, Reima smiled.

"Then... see you later Usagi."

After a brief farewell, Reima left.

Takeru looked at his back for a while and then took Usagi's hands which grabbed onto his clothes on to his own..

"...it's okay now."

What happened, and what was Usagi's relationship with Reima. Takeru didn't know. But Usagi in front of him was certainly scared.

After her hand was held, Usagi finally looked up.

"Usagi...?!"

Her eyes were wet with tears, and there was dread within them.

Usagi's breathing was rough, and she inhaled air painfully.

Even before, they were symptoms Usagi rarely showed. It was hyperventilation that came from tension. It was considerably less frequent lately, since he calmed her down during combat he didn't have to worry about it, but her state today was weird.

"It's all right. Calm down, I'm the only one here. There's no one else."

"...haa...haa..."

Usagi looked around suspiciously, she looked behind her several times terrified.

"Usagi, look in my eyes. Just look at me."

Takeru calmly placed his hand on her shoulder, and tried to calm her somehow.

He was taught by Ikaruga that the best remedy for her hyperventilation is to 'talk to her', but he had to make sure she doesn't look around before he calms her down that way.

"Haa......haa...so...rry..."

Usagi's eyes wandered and she said apologies to someone who wasn't there.

*...this is bad, people gathered around here.*

Perhaps because of the sound Usagi's heavy breathing made, students who were working in the courtyard walked up to them worried. Having other folks approach them now wasn't good. Even something as trivial as that could awaken some memory and cause her to hyperventilate again.

Slowly as not to surprise her, Takeru placed his hand on Usagi's head and gently stroked it.

"...nh...fu....hii..."

"Don't worry. I'm right here."

"...he..lp...me...Kusanagi..."

"Yeah, I'll help you. You're not alone. I'm by your side."

When he spoke to her gently, Usagi's breathing gradually settled down.

And when her eyes focused, despite looking tired, when she saw Takeru's face she was relieved and fainted immediately after.

Takeru stopped Usagi from falling forward by embracing her.

"…………"

When he thought of the cause, the first thing that appeared in his mind was Reima's face.

He said they were childhood friends... but was that really true?

He didn't look like a bad guy at all... but he was quite forceful.

Takeru held Usagi in both of his hands and headed towards the infirmary.

"…………"

After Reima separated from Usagi, he was watching her and Takeru's figure from the back of the school building.

"I see... it seems like she has a tough guard."

Unlike Reima from a moment ago, all gentleness disappeared from his face.

Expressionless, or rather, he looked like a nervous observer.

Reima exhaled deeply and started to walk.

"Well, it's fine. I can hold out until the Witch-Hunting festival is over."

After changing expression to his original one, Reima started to walk back to school leisurely.

Just be patient. What has to happen will happen.

He told that to himself, and laughed. That smile was far from evil, it was as if,

"I look forward to it... how shall I turn her into my pet. When the guy she's clinging to is gone, I wonder how is she going to please me."

As if he was an innocent kid playing with a gift.

Summoned by the student council, Ouka entered the third data preparation room in multi-purpose school building

Weird. When being called by the student council, they usually specify a student council room. The reason they chose such a location far from the public eyes was obvious. The possibility of a trap couldn't be ruled out.

Remembering the odor, Ouka checked her gun before going to the meeting place.

"——Ootori Ouka-san, right?"

She heard a voice from behind and immediately pointed her gun's muzzle there.

Ouka was an ex-Dullahan. She was skilled in sensing others' presence.

To catch her from behind required a considerable amount of skill.

Although Ouka pointed her gun while releasing killing intent, the person behind her raised both hands claiming they are harmless and moved towards Ouka as she pointed her muzzle at them as if already expecting it.

It was a schoolgirl with beautiful long black hair and a serious look.

"Sorry for this kind of welcome. I'm from the student council."

"…………"

"You should have seen me during the assembly right? I'm the student council's secretary, Sendou Shizuka."

"...show something that proves your identity."

Seeing Ouka's attitude, the woman calling herself Sendou smiled somehow relieved.

"You're just like President said you'll be. If it's not at least this much, then there would be no point in doing this."

"...? What do you mean?"

Instead of answering the question, Sendou removed her ID card and showed it to Ouka.

"…………confirmed. I apologize for my rudeness."

"It's fine. Please come with me. It's possible we might be seen by the enemy here."

...enemy? Ouka made a face which said she didn't understand.

Sendou started walking and set foot into the data room. The room was filled with a smell of dust and there was no light. The room was very dim.

After continuing to walk in the data room without hesitation, Sendou finally stopped walking by the innermost bookshelf.

"...umm?"

As Ouka gave her a questioning look, Sendou tilted a book on the shelf lightly.

**gagon**, with a dull sound the bookshelf started to slide to the side.

She understood after seeing that, it was a hidden door.

"A book on a bookshelf being a switch... very classic. That's the President's hobby."

"It was made by the student council?"

"It's called the 'second student council room'. It's been made by another student council a long time ago, but it was subjected to remodeling for no reason by the current President. You probably know already, but our President is an idiot."

Being told that, Ouka recalled the current President.

If it's her, then she would do this kind of pointless thing. Is what she thought.

Prompted by Sendou, Ouka passed through the hidden door. The entrance had two doors, when the first one was closed Sendou entered a card-key into the second door.

With a heavy sound, the door opened. A dim fluorescent light entered her pupils and she grasped the state of the inside. The first thing she noticed were the firearms hanging on the wall, and then the material the wall itself was made of... it was probably made out of adamantium. It was a room that looked like a fortress.

And next, in the center of the room——for some reason there was a kotatsu.

In that kotatsu, there was a single female student who squinted because she felt warm and relaxed.

She had fiery red hair and amber-colored eyes that seemed like they would suck you in. She was so short it was difficult to call her a high schooler, she had a childish body.

Hoshijiro Nagaru. The person who became the student council president in her second year, said to be the most influential student in the entire school. She narrowed her eyes like a cat and yawned after resting her jaw on the kotatsu.

"Yahoo〜 Ouka〜chan. It's been a while〜"

Her first words already stripped Ouka of all motivation.

Seeing her stuff her mouth with mandarins Ouka made a disgruntled expression.

"...you're same as usual, Student Council President Hoshijiro."

Since Ouka was invited to the student council, she was acquainted with her.

She always had perfect results, wasn't as serious as Ouka and didn't have her violent tendencies. And above all, her way of calling her Ouka-chan was annoying her the most.

Seeing her attitude that didn't have a shred of dignity and goes with the flow, anger stirred in Ouka.

"You're scary ー. If you get too angry your blood pressure will raise and you'll go bald you know〜?"

"Telling a girl she'll go bald is rude, President."

"Shizuka-chan, thanks for the good work〜. There, a mandarin."

Sendou entered the kotatsu and going along with Nagaru, she started peeling a mandarin.

What's up with this laid-back atmosphere... Ouka's face looked even more annoyed.

"Ouka-chan come too. It's warm〜? And mandarins are delicious〜?"

"I'll pass. Rather than that, lets get to the main issue immediately."

Hearing Ouka say that with hostility, Nagaru made a dissatisfied face and held her chin in her hands.

"How cold〜"

"...I don't know why are you holing up yourself in a place like this and leaving the management of the Witch-Hunting festival to the executive committee."

"Don't talk as if I'm a NEET〜."

"Is there any difference?"

Ouka continued to preach her. She realized that Nagaru was just like Sougetsu.

This woman was a villain who used others. She usually posed as a lazy and avoided sticking her nose in other's matters. But when she finally took action, she was incredible.

She was definitely one of the rotten people whom Ouka would never forgive.

"Rather being told I'm holing up, I'd rather you say I'm defending from a siege... even so, we do intend on protecting the school you know?"

"Protect the school? From what?"

Ouka laughed through her nose.

Nagaru spit out a sigh realizing she couldn't drag Ouka into her pace, and looked straight at her with her amber eyes.

"Of course, from a witch."

"That much is obvious. Protecting the world from the threat of witches is our responsibility. I think that applies to everyone gathered in this school."

"I don't believe that's true... I have no confidence that Ouka-chan will believe me, but the situation is more serious than you think."

"...what's going on."

When Nagaru finally started to talk seriously, Ouka focused her mind.

Then Nagaru said with a serious expression.

"This Academy will fall into the hands of a single witch. It's only a matter of time until the witch will take complete control of it."

Hearing such a crazy story, Ouka was both dumbfounded and startled at the same time.

"I don't.... understand."

"That's why you should relax, let's talk this over step by step okay～? It's your fault for being in a hurry～"

you impatient girl, Nagaru scolded Ouka and **tap tap* she hit the kotatsu.

Sit down, is what she meant. Albeit reluctantly, Ouka put her feet under kotatsu and faced Nagaru. Nagaru still had her chin in her hands and stared straight at Ouka before quietly speaking about what was happening in school.

"Does Ouka-chan———know about a witch called Mephistopheles?"

# Chapter 3 – Mephistopheles

AntiMagic Academy's infirmary provided practically everything. It was obvious, the students here suffered injuries more often than students of normal schools. The equipment in the infirmary even if it wasn't perfect, it was proficient enough to the extent of being able to perform minor surgeries.

"...she's all right for now, we can be relieved. But she's really a girl who makes others worry."

Ikaruga lightly stroked Usagi who was sleeping in bed, she had a dreamy expression on her face.

"I was surprised that she collapsed as well... does this kind of thing happen frequently?"

Mari who stared at Usagi anxiously while sitting on a stool asked Ikaruga and Takeru.

"Although it happened a few times in high school, it's the first time for it to be this bad."

It seemed to have happened often in middle school too. But they didn't know much about Usagi from that time, they've heard she fainted in one of the female toilets before.

"I see... Usagi chan was with you for only half a year right. It feels as if something happened recently..."

Mari twisted around and looked up at the ceiling while exploring her memories.

Takeru too had quite a few ideas about what might've caused it. Over a period of several months since the Hero attack there was a series of harsh events. It was not impossible for that to be the cause, and the fact that she was involved couldn't be denied.

"After the incident with Alchemist she's been a bit depressed. We should have called out to her."

Ikaruga reflected on it while messing with Usagi's hair.

"This girl... she was always good at hiding her real feelings from me."

"...is that so? I feel like she's the easiest one to see through."

Mari tilted her neck. Ikaruga put a hand on her own chin.

"What she is good at, is quite different from what you said. To be exact, she's been always forcing herself like that and it became common, so when it becomes the real deal it's hard to tell. Also, she might have been in this state the entire time."

"I can understand that somehow. She's always acting frantic, that Usagi-chan."

"She's not doing that for kicks, she's always serious. We always end up causing trouble to her. She has more patience than anyone, but Usagi's also weaker than anyone."

"Oh... I thought it's her personality, I didn't know that at all. I'm sorry, Usagi-chan."

Tears appeared in Mari's eyes.

"It's probably something that has to do with her home as well."

As Ikaruga spoke out her prediction, Mari showed great interest.

"She's a humble young lady?"

"Saionji house has ties with Inquisition. Her father seems to be one of higher ups in Inquisition Board. Because it's a superior family, I think she has undergone harsh education. I can imagine she grew up under tremendous pressure ever since she was small. Though, I can't say whether that's really true or not."

"So even Suginami didn't hear anything about her house huh."

"I won't ask her unless she tells me herself. I also had a lot of things I didn't want others to know... but well, because of certain people it's been exposed. I'm bad with things like these."

Although her words sounded cold, Ikaruga was concerned. Even if they were comrades, there are matters they shouldn't stick their noses into.

Takeru wasn't good at grasping the distance between him and the others. Since it was insensitive and depressing for them to butt in, they would only watch in silence unless something serious happened.

However, this time he felt it was something serious.

"...before collapsing, Usagi was talking with the Witch-Hunting festival executive committee chairman."

"The one who held a speech about Witch-Hunting festival being held?"

"Yeah... it seems like he and Usagi are relatives, childhood friends."

Takeru remembered how he stopped Reima and muttered that.

Ikaruga showed a reaction.

"Tenmyouji Reima eh. Tenmyouji is the name of the ethics committee's chairman."

"? Is that so?"

"Yeah, He's probably the Chairman's son. I don't know of any other relatives, then... a childhood friend..."

"But aren't the ethics committee and Inquisition Board like oil and water...?"

"The committee is quite a significant organization, but they're not really at odds. The Ethics committee is objecting against witch discrimination and Inquisition adapts depending on their opinion, the ethics committee has no intention of taking down the Inquisition. Both of them have something the other needs, they were originally the same organization."

"I didn't know that... Suginami really is well oriented in the situation between the organizations."

"...Kusanagi, you... even elementary school students know about the current affairs."

"...seriously?"

Even Mari said "Even I know that..." with an amazed look on her face.

The Ethics Committee was originally Inquisition's auditing office made by up by part of the higher-echelons, an organization launched for the sake of advocating for the witches, it wasn't a separate organization at the beginning.

A mechanism, monitoring witch trials. In fact, it was an organization monitoring Inquisition.

Mari heard about the ethics committee and made a complex smile.

"Inquisition is black, but that place is also dangerous. I'm a witch but I don't know the circumstances inside of it. It isn't just Ootori Ouka's opinion, but are they seeking equality or preferential treatment for witches? Honestly, having so many people complaining that witches need more rights, it's unsettling."

"I guess. Giving power to an organization made up on a single philosophy is quite naive."

Although Takeru didn't know about the politics much, he was surprised that Reima who's from the Ethics Committee side was attending AntiMagic Academy.

"The heir of Tenmyouji family has enrolled in the school probably to change Inquisition from inside. If he was the student council president of the branch school, he must've been quite outstanding."

"Or he has connections."

"I can't deny that possibility."

"Keke, just like a certain despicable woman. Also, what is Ootori Ouka doing right now?! While Usagi-chan is in such state!"

Mari blamed Ouka while pouting.

So Takeru told her what the was situation with Ouka.

"I couldn't contact her. She seemed to have been called to the student council, I can't really disturb her now."

"Student council? Hmm, I wonder what's more important, the student council or Usagi-chan."

"No, I was the one who hasn't contacted her... I think she would come over at once if I did.

He made a wry smile and scratched his cheek.

Because Takeru thought so, he didn't contact Ouka. It wasn't anything life-threatening and Usagi wasn't about to wake up anytime soon. He thought that if they worried about her too much, Usagi wouldn't be able to handle it.

Just, he thought that she will yell at them for remaining silent, and she would probably come over even if it happened at night. That's what Takeru thought.

That's when a Seelie opened the curtains and looked inside.

"You guys are still here. When Saionji wakes up I'll send her home, so hurry up and go back."

The female Seelie withdrew and closed the curtain behind her. Taking a light breath Ikaruga stood up from the chair.

"You two, let's go back for today. Once she wakes up Usagi will definitely come to our room."

"Isn't it fine to stay in school because of the preparations for the Witch-Hunting festival?"

"There's still a lot to do. We're going to work hard starting from tomorrow, get a good rest."

Ignoring Ikaruga's creepy smile Mari checked the time on the clock.

The day was coming to an end.

"I'd like to stay together, but I have to go and participate in an experiment with summoning magical organisms, and you Takeru?"

"I have a part time now but I wanted to at least stay until she wakes up..."

Takeru tried to stand up, and that's when someone pulled his sleeve.

Although she was asleep, Usagi was grabbing Takeru's clothes.

Ikaruga grinned.

"Ara ara, you're being really loved."

"Yeah... when she wakes up, I'll take her home."

"Then, why don't you two stay in my room? Having the first experience with the three of us together, that's so immortal and makes me horny——"

"I have the part time job to do! I have no time to bother with you!"

Takeru retorted against her obscene speculations

Mari directed a gaze full of suspicion at Takeru.

"...you're not going to do anything lewd to the sleeping Usagi-chan will you?"

"I won't! Do I look like a guy who would do that?"!"

""…………""

"Is there anything you want to say!!"

While Takeru was desperate and misunderstood, the two opened the curtains as they joked.

"Then I'll leave it to you. We came over since we were worried after hearing that, also, I feel responsible for this girl too. It's fine to do erotic things, but if you intend to do it contact me first, I'll be recording it with my phone——"

"I won't forgive you if you do anything naughty! If you do, I'll make you regret it!"

The two of them pointed at him and said so, Takeru couldn't even make a wry smile any more.

He was left alone with Usagi in the hospital room, he gazed at her sleeping face again.

Takeru didn't know what was she hiding behind that peaceful sleeping expression. Although her excessive breathing that came from tension disappeared, it didn't wipe out the other possibilities.

Usagi's frightened expression and Reima's words.

They were haunting him.

"...Mephistopheles, is it? I've heard about him..."

Ouka frowned with a bit of a shocked expression.

Nagaru expected that reaction and smiled wryly.

"It's a presence known to the world as an urban legend. They say it's a witch who eats hearts, a devil that seizes souls. And there is no one who has seen its figure... for anyone who've seen it died after having their soul eaten."

"…………"

"If that witch really existed, and was attempting to dominate this school right now, what would Ouka-chan do?"

Nagaru stared at Ouka curiously.

Ouka closed her eyes and shook her head.

"Excuse me, but this is ridiculous."

"Is that so? If you say that, then that would mean magic existing in this world would also be something ridiculous. Don't you think it's weird as well～"

"...since a rumor like that exists, there might be a magic similar to what's described. However, the concept of soul hasn't been clarified yet and there is no magic that can detach a soul from its vessel. There is no such thing as the spiritual body. These are just assumptions, there is no way to interfere with the souls of others."

"...I wonder if that really is so—"

Hearing Nagaru's comment, Ouka narrowed her eyes sharply.

"What does Ouka-chan think about possession magic?"

"............ Again talking about fairy tales. Possession magic was said to be used by magical organisms called "Devils". The nature of that magic is too different from that of a human witch, it's usage is impossible. Even if a devil were to be successfully summoned, the only one capable of using possession magic would be the devil, and not the witch itself."

Typically, summoning magic performed by witches contacts a different dimension, a different world or phase and allows them to call magical organisms by forming a contract and giving them magic in exchange. Magical organisms did appear in this world in the past, but they generally live in a different world.

Animal souls, human souls, fairies, spirits, hero souls, fantastic souls, angels, devil, divinities.

The easiest one to summon from, is that which uses the phase of a world that's relatively close, the one which houses human souls.

Mari's Belladonna Garden come from the fairy realm.

Also, in the first place they couldn't appear in this world alone and needed the caster's magical power at all times, a sacrifice was required.

Therefore higher level summons like "Hero Summoning" and "Legend Summoning" required huge sacrifices.

Although lesser beings could be summoned. Devils and Angels, as well as Gods' summoning "Myth Summoning" was impossible unless the world itself was sacrificed. The circumstances surrounding the world those organisms live in, haven't been clarified yet. Also, witches that use summoning magic have a relationship of give and take with the organisms and aren't constantly in contact with them.

Therefore, magic used by magical organisms couldn't be understood by humans. There was many examples of that.

"As usual, you're really knowledgeable. However～, you should be more open minded～. Unfortunately, the witch that uses possession magic is real."

《Install》

It's an unique magic that allows fixing a soul into the bodies of others used by Devils. It's commonly called demonic possession or spirit possession correspondingly. The person on whom this magic is used on is tainted with the devil's soul and it results with his own soul being eaten.

What remains, is a body in which a different soul from its original dwells, a monster wearing a human skin.

However, just like Ouka said, it was a magic humans could not use.

"In fact, we've been fighting with that guy recently."

Ouka didn't believe in such an unreasonable story, but she decided to shut up and listen.

"My subordinates who were following a B-class Magical Heritage were attacked by him, one person's body was taken over and everyone else was killed."

"The entire... student council platoon?"

"Yup. It seems like they killed each other."

"...killed each other?"

"They didn't know who did Mephisto entered and became suspicious. Even he one person who survived it suspected that the enemy might be inside him and committed suicide. The child whose body was stolen is missing, and is probably dead now."

"............"

"That guy had inside information for some reason and outwitted our attack. The student council was virtually eradicated. I suspect he entered the school after possessing another student."

"...if that's really true, then did you report it?"

"Even Ouka-chan doesn't believe this right? They are the same. They brushed it off while laughing."

And thanks to that they think I'm not right in the head now, Nagaru smiled bitterly.

It didn't look like she was lying.

"The student council was wiped out. The only ones left is me and Shizuka-chan."

Good grief, she sipped the tea looking lonely.

The student council was devastated, and Nagaru holed herself up in this small room for a month, that's why she said it was siege.

Since she couldn't move she wanted Ouka to take down Mephisto, that's why she was called to such a place.

"By the way Ouka-chan... what do you think about Tenmyouji Reima?"

Nagaru asked while wrapping both of her hands around a cup.

"Tenmyouji... from the Witch-Hunting festival executive committee? I don't know much, only that he's the son of the Ethics Committee Chairman."

What about him? Asked Ouka.

Nagaru squinted sharply and sipped tea from her cup.

"Don't you think, he's acting unnatural?"

"...unnatural?"

"Try thinking normally. He's a transfer student, not even a month passed since he came to this school. Moreover, he's a person from the Ethics Committee side?"

"..........."

"Even though the Ethics Committee is recognized, there are quite a few students complaining about witches being protected by human rights. If anything, being from the Ethics Committee side should be a disadvantage... and yet, he alone has a weird personal magnetism."

Ouka could understand what Nagaru meant by unnatural.

Even though discrimination against witches has decreased in the world, it didn't apply to AntiMagic Academy which was quite detached from the world. How students are treating witches... it could be easily understood by looking at how Mari is treated.

The people from organization that defends the witches are the same. They are subjected to isolation.

"Don't you think it's strange that this kind of guy hosting the Witch-Hunting festival?"

"...certainly, it might be so. I've heard that he was the student council president in the branch school he was in before. So it wouldn't be weird for him to have the ability and personality, would it?"

"We also thought so, we cross-examined him, his performance and reputation from his previous school."

While saying that, Nagaru pulled out a report card from under the kotatsu and passed it to Ouka.

Ouka looked at the report card, and made a bitter face.

"............terrible."

"That's right. Whether its studies or practical, he has no skills. While it might be that popularity and leadership won him the place of student council president, it's different in here."

As Nagaru said, in AntiMagic Academy you couldn't enter the student council unless you had both popularity and ability. Even in the branch school it should be the same.

"The upper-echelons pulled the strings... no, even so this is..."

There was a limit to it. He wouldn't be able to enter the student council. It's not the adults deciding it but the students.

"Weird, isn't it. Nevertheless, Tenmyouji became the student council president in his second year. If you ask about his reputation, all the branch school students praise him. Reima-sama this, Reima-sama that. It goes to a disgusting extent."

Ouka remembered the emergency meeting during the morning assembly. She recalled the female students who raised their voices as Reima spoke. It was similar, is what she thought.

Reima came over to the main school only a month ago... getting this popular in just a month was weird.

"Because these references were not helpful, we found a student who changed schools from the fourth branch and asked that kid how Tenmyouji Reima was as a 1st grader. And then..."

"............"

"An asshole. The impression of him could be summarized in one word. After telling that kid he was popular and the student council president at branch school, it was laughed as a lie."

Hearing that, Ouka placed a hand on her chin.

"When was it that Mephisto attacked student council?"

"A bit more than a month ago."

"Location?"

"Relatively close to ruins near the fourth branch school. The second time was on the forest road near the same place."

Ouka glared at Reima's report card and clenched her fist strongly.

She understood what Nagaru wanted to convey to her. The point was that, there was a high possibility Reima could be Mephisto right now. A Sudden change of personality, unnatural popularity. If the soul inside changed, and his true identity is a witch, then that would explain that rapid change.

Using spirit interference magic would have attracted many students.

Then...

"...the resuming of Witch-Hunting festival is something Tenmyouji planned, wasn't it."

"Since we holed up here to protect ourselves, that event's prepared in 100% by the Executive Committee."

"If he's really Mephisto then... he's the one who held the Witch-Hunting festival for..."

"A sacrifice, probably. Maybe he's gathering people during Witch-Hunting festival to perform some kind of large-scale magic..."

This is where Ouka-chan's turn starts. With that Nagaru's serious expression disappeared and *funyaa*, she yawned.

"Shizuka-chan is going to cooperate with you to investigate Tenmyouji Reima, if you find any evidence... If it's possible I want you to secure that guy～. Since we're not sure whether he's Mephisto yet, I want you to confirm it first."

"Umm, why didn't you consider the possibility I might have already fallen into enemy's hands?"

"You're a Relic Eater contractor aren't you? If he tried to possess you he would get exposed to Inquisition immediately."

Nagaru said it as if it was obvious.

The fact that Ouka was a Relic Eater contractor shouldn't have been known by any of the students. She probably learned about it from her connections. It seemed like there was no bottom to things this woman knew.

She glanced at Ouka with her pupils of amber and continued.

"The reason I picked Ouka-chan, is because you can be trusted, right?"

"What do you base that on."

"You don't trust the Chairman do you? You're wondering what's behind that white-haired ghost, I can tell. You're wondering about the state of current Inquisition... am I wrong?"

"............"

"That would mean you're our comrade. I think you can make the correct decision. Even if you are daughter of the Chairman, I think you will go to the very bottom of a case."

"I have to decline. I have no interest in personal gain and power struggles among organizations."

"Personal gain～?"

"You're ambition incarnated. One day, you want to stand on top of the Inquisition. This time too, you used the student council as pieces; as a shield to checked whether Mephisto was real, and you are trying to undermine the Chairman's authority."

"...so you can tell that much～. You're amazing～ Ouka-chan."

For a moment, Nagaru's true nature could be seen on her face. An unique intoxicated expression of someone who stands above others, and uses them in their plays.. However, it wasn't as bad as Sougetsu's, Ouka evaluated Nagaru.

A bit of humanity remained in Nagaru.

"You're more or less right, but it's a bit different. The main reason I want to kill Mephisto isn't ambition... but a grudge."

A grudge? When she asked about it, Nagaru put on a troubled smile and continued to turn the cup in her fingers.

"It would be vengeance I guess～. It's troubling that I'm this kind of person , but I don't feel sad nor frustrated about my subordinates dying. But the children who were killed probably were different. They were sad, and they were frustrated. I want to do it for the children who felt those feelings and take revenge on him～."

With a wry smile, Nagaru tilted her neck.

"It was because of us that all these children died."

"............"

"I'm giving out instructions like this, but I can't fight by myself. My grades are good, but I'm horrible at actual combat. Pathetic isn't it～"

"............"

"Even so, I'm the student council president chosen by the children who died. I want to take responsibility, it's my job～"

**Ehhen*, she lightly puffed her chest.

"Well, these are our circumstances, Ouka-chan also wants to stop them don't you. For your revenge, and for your precious comrades, and all those other kinds of reasons... right?"

**kufufu*, Nagaru placed a hand on her mouth and laughed like a cat.

If it was the touch of humanity, it was precisely this. Judging from her words she knew Ouka's circumstances. Ouka started to hate her more and more.

"If you want revenge for your comrades, why don't you dirty your own hand. We're speaking about revenge you know? I'm going to do so myself."

"Why... Ouka-chan. It will be troubling if the only ones knowing the existence of Mephisto disappear right? What can a general do on the front lines."

Nagaru raised her index finger up and swayed it back and forth.

"The people standing on the top, always stays in the back, moving their minions from a safe and snugly location〜. To be the last one to die... what a sad fate it is!"

Disgusted by Nagaru's way of thinking, Ouka got out of the kotatsu and stood up.

"Oh, are you going to do it? As expected of the woman we had picked. I think you believe us when it comes to Mephisto's existence."

"No. I don't believe in it. I——"

Ouka looked back at Nagaru,

"——I'm going to confirm it with my own eyes and ears before I make the decision."

After she said what she believed in, Ouka left the second student council's room.

It was nine p.m. In the infirmary room lit up by moonlight Usagi lightly opened her eyes.

"Mmn............?"

After noticing her surroundings are dark, she confirmed where she was.

"Nn, you woke up. Good morning, Usagi."

On a chair placed right next to the bed, with his back to the window from which the moon peeked in, was Takeru. He had a thin smile on his face.

"I... why.."

"You've collapsed in the courtyard. You don't remember?"

Usagi explored her memory. The sky dyed by sunset, when Reima's shadowed face appeared in her thoughts, she felt a faint chill, but her spirit wasn't all that disturbed.

While fixing the button on her shirt, she glanced sideways at Takeru.

"Were you... beside me all this time?"

"I promised to stay beside you after all."

Just before she fell, right before her vision went blank, she heard his voice as her consciousness faded.

You're not alone. I'm by your side.

So that was Takeru's voice, Usagi blushed unconsciously.

She looked at the clock in the infirmary, it was nine o'clock. She slept for four hours or more.

"I-I'm sorry. I slept for so long, I...!"

"Don't worry about it. I've slept as well. Since I've been doing a part time job every day, I didn't sleep too much recently."

Takeru stretched his body with a small growl.

Even if he said not to worry about it. Knowing that he waited for her to wake up for four hours, she felt apologetic. Usagi also knew about Takeru's part time work, since it was nine o'clock, it meant he was already late. He must have taken a day off to accompany her.

"I'm... sorry."

Hating her own habits, she continued to apologize quietly.

Takeru hearing her apology stroked Usagi's head while laughing faintly.

"Let's go home. I'll walk you home."

Without saying anything, moved by Takeru's kindness and gentle laughter she nodded.

"L-let me prepare, can you wait a moment for me?"

When she moved her body trying to get down from the bed, she noticed her hand was touching something warm.

She looked at it, and saw her own hand firmly holding Takeru's big hand.

"A..awawa...wawa.."

"? Ohh, this."

"Pe-perhaps... I... I've been holding it this entire time?! During my sleep, all this time?!"

"You were half asleep. And since it's been quite cold lately, it was probably because it was something warm."

Usagi released her hand in a hurry, and put her hands on her cheeks.

Feeling her face burning hot, disgraceful, she looked down.

When she thought about it, she got embarrassed by the fact her sleeping face was seen for four hours straight.

She also wondered whether she blurted out anything strange in her sleep, and if she didn't drool.

Such things continued to cross her mind, and Usagi nearly started hyperventilating again.

"Calm down, isn't holding hands fine. I'm happy that you relied on me."

"UuUuuuu"

"...that's why, umm... calm down."

Takeru smiled and pat her head again.

As he stroked her head, for some reason all the anxiety always faded away.

His hands had a very nostalgic feel to it, and made her feel at ease.

*Why do I always... depend on these hands of his so much.*

Despite the fact that she decided to surrender in her thoughts, inside Usagi dwelled a feeling that said she couldn't continue like that.

When the day of farewell comes, it will be painful.

That was her only concern.

On their way back, they walked side by side through a street that had luxurious houses lined one next to another.

Although the doctor from infirmary offered to send her home by car, they thought it was a good chance to talk a bit and Takeru respectfully declined.

They didn't talk. Usagi felt dispirited and walked by Takeru's side while dragging her feet and looking down.

"I'm sorry for, for the inconvenience I have caused you. I will do my best not to bother you any more."

"Didn't I tell you not to worry about that?"

"I will definitely maintain my calm from now on... that's why... that's why..."

She couldn't utter the continuation, and fell silent again.

It seemed like she was a bit nervous.

Certainly, she sometimes blundered because of her tension rising in the past.

But Takeru still relied on Usagi. The examples were the Hero terrorism or the tournament attack, even the Alchemist case just before. The platoon was saved by her. If Usagi wasn't there, Takeru would have dead already.

He appreciated that and never thought of blaming her.

And even though they didn't have any results, they did well up until now.

The reason Usagi was weak right now was probably...

"Executive committee chairman... Tenmyouji was it. He's your relative isn't he."

When he brought it up, Usagi's shoulder trembled slightly.

Takeru didn't miss that reaction.

"...did something happen between you and him?"

As not to stimulate her as much as possible, he tried to ask her casually.

Usagi faced down and slowed a little, she began to walk behind Takeru.

She didn't answer and didn't show her expression.

She just continued to stay silent.

"Sorry, forget about it. It's something that concerns your family, it's not like I want to stick my neck into your affairs."

With his back turned towards Usagi, Takeru said so.

As long as she doesn't speak by herself, he wouldn't interfere with her private matters. Although they had been able to take care of the danger when it came to Ikaruga, it was different with Usagi. In her case, it was a matter of heart.

It was an unspoken law of the 35th test platoon, to protect each other.

"...I am not burdened with anything special like Suginami was."

Usagi muttered quietly. But in this silence, Takeru heard it.

"It's circumstances in my household. That's why even if I say it, it can't be helped."

Her usual stout-hearted attitude, and her domineering attitude which concealed everything weren't there, and Usagi's voice was husky.

"...what is it. You're not your usual self."

"............"

"That's irrelevant. Don't compare yourself to your comrades. In the first place, even if your troubles weight less than theirs, it doesn't mean they're light for you."

"…………"

"If those troubles are heavy for you, then they would be heavy for me as well."

"…………"

"No matter what it is, if you say you want my help, I'll help you with all my strength."

With these words of Takeru, Usagi's feet stop. He also stopped and looked back at her.

Although he thought he acted like a show off, but it wasn't a lie.

A car passed by them, and lit the two with its headlights.

Usagi turned towards Takeru who had a troubled smile on his face.

"It's impossible for Kusanagi."

"It ain't impossible. Don't say that before you try. Even I can do a thing or two for you——"

"Then, if I said I want to marry Kusanagi right now, would you do it?"

...what did she say?

Takeru blanked out.

"Meaning, will you take me as your wife?"

It took a few seconds for Takeru to understand what Usagi was talking about.

Did she say marry? Why marriage? He didn't think it was a joke considering the current situation, marriage, in other words, it's some kind of proposal. No, in such atmosphere, she must've meant it seriously.

There were tears in Usagi's eyes, and she wasn't laughing. She wasn't even embarrassed.

In her eyes, there were no expectation. It seemed as if she gave up on something.

"Impossible, right?"

Usagi wiped her tears off and looked down with a hand on her chest.

"The reason for my suffering, is something like that. Tenmyouji Reima is my fiancée, he's the son of Ethics Committee Chairman. Saionji house is in a dangerous position in the Inquisition Board, and there is no other heir than me. It's because I'm a bastard child that my parents decided to use me as a tool for political maneuvers."

"...these days, that kind of thing... still happens?"

In short, it was a marriage of convenience. Regardless of the person in question herself, her parents decided the lifelong partner for her by themselves. It was a story from a world different from the one Takeru lived in.

"Since I didn't have any good results in school I have no value as a tool to use. Originally my grandfather was closer to Ethics Committee, and that's more than enough of a reason to change jobs, that's the only way left for Saionji. It can't be helped."

"Even so... this is wrong."

"Then... what should... I do?"

Faced with that question head on, Takeru couldn't answer.

Usagi's expression clearly indicated she tried to endure it.

In the pitch black darkness, she was shouting for help. Takeru reflected on himself.

It was an unrealistic story, and no solutions came to his mind. That's why, he thought just like Usagi that there's no other way than to get married.

However, that was a mistake.

Even if they married without a reason, it wouldn't change anything about the political marriage.

"...I apologize. I shouldn't have spoken about it to Kusanagi after all."

"............"

"I will leave the school in a month. So at the very least I wanted to spend the time in the platoon like usual, but... the weakness in my heart became unbearable."

As she faced down, a single teardrop spilled from her eyes.

Surely, she must've been desperately trying to act as she usually did after she was placed under such circumstances.

And yet, after confronting Reima she had to face the reality and collapsed.

But Takeru was still not convinced.

A marriage of convenience. That wasn't enough of a reason to have her be frightened this much. Right? Takeru didn't know how she was treated in Saionji household.

There had to be something else there. Definitely.

However, if Usagi was really going to quit school.

And she herself didn't want that, that was an inexcusable tyranny they couldn't allow as her comrades.

Then, what should he do? How could he help Usagi? It wasn't something he could fight with, there was no clear enemy. While he hit a brick wall when it came to various members' circumstances before, in a sense, this was the most troublesome case.

What can Takeru who had "a single brain cell" do. What can Takeru who only knew swordsmanship do. How should he stick his neck into her family circumstances, stop the marriage and make sure Usagi continues going to school. That was...

"Usagi."

Takeru walked up to Usagi and stood in front of her.

She forced her head up, and stared at him.

Takeru returned her gaze, and while staring straight at her he put a hand on her shoulder.

And,

"You——stay in my room for today."

Not knowing how he came up to such a conclusion, Usagi blanked out.

She even forgot to blush, and opened her mouth agape.

It was 10 p.m., it was a little early to get to sleep.

The steam obscured her vision, and the sound of water resounded throughout the bathroom. Usagi was standing under the shower in a daze for about ten minutes already.

She was currently in Takeru's room. After he said that she should stay in his room, Takeru silently grabbed her hand and brought her to his apartment.

It was the first time she seen Takeru so assertive.

*First time...*

With the image those words reminded her of, Usagi's face reddened in a flash.

"W-w-wha-what am I... it's unsoundly... shameless...!!"

She placed a hand on her cheek and reduced the shower's temperature to cool herself down.

However, as she thought about it, even if Takeru invited her to his room by himself, that was the only way it could have been interpreted. Also, the reason Usagi entered bath was 'I want to think about it a little longer'.

The simplest interpretation was——I won't let you sleep tonight?

"Nnnhaaa〜〜...!"

In the first place, she was the one who asked if he will marry her. Maybe it was his response to her proposal, and it turned into this kind of behavior.

"If I was invited then... it means it's an OK? F-for us t-to ma-marry? ...fuaaa...?"

She didn't know what Takeru's real intention was, and even if it really was a marriage proposal, she didn't know how to react to it. She felt like rolling around the bathroom.

"H-h-hhhowever such an act, i-isn't it t-to be done after getting married... the first time i-is that kind of thing right...?"

No, wait. And Usagi stopped.

*I-in the world there's something like fait accompli. I-if I make a child before that, I won't have to marry Reima-sama. It's surprisingly reasonable... if we make a child, I'll be able to stay with Kusanagi forever... b-but, wait wait wait a second! I want to stay with the platoon, not only with Kusanagi. Suginami is important to me as well, even Ootori and Nikaido, even though it's annoying, they are comrades.*

**swish swish swish**, she continued to shake her head.

But if she became Takeru's wife, she would be always nearby and it would be really a joyous thing right? If she was his wife she could monopolize him. Anytime and anywhere, he would praise her and pet her head if she asked him.

She thought of what was most important to her. It was possible to get his love. The thing she desired the most, that her family couldn't give her... Takeru might be able to give her.

*Nonononononono! Isn't that just giving up?! Doesn't it feel like he did it out of sympathy because of circumstances in my house?! Also, that's not what fait accompli means. It's having children, children! Having children with such impure intentions. To begin with, why is it children, the thing I want is actually something else...*

And, she tried to imagine it in her thoughts. Takeru would be the father, Usagi would be the mother. A poor but warm home. A family spending their days while holding hands.

Takeru smiling kindly by her side, and she herself holding a baby.

...........

She saw herself being incredibly happy.

"Auaaa〜〜..."

Blood rushed to her head and she nearly fell over, she placed her hands on the wall.

While anxious about whether she should go or not, Usagi stopped thinking.

"...fine, what happens shall happen."

While blushing the entire time, she washed her body more thoroughly than usual and soaked in the bathtub.

She placed a hand on her chest which floated in the water like balloon and pressed it lightly. It was also one of Usagi's complexes, her big breasts disproportionate to her short body. They were a hindrance, and men stared at them, her big breasts which to her only had negative aspects to them.

...they say men like them bigger.

"...will Kusanagi... be happy about them..."

It might be a good factor for her first time.

She couldn't stand her naughtiness any longer, and sunk her head in the bathtub.

Usagi went in the bath and Takeru had already finished making his call and was sitting cross-legged with his arms folded.

For the time being, what he was equipped with was what he had in his head only.

They will all gather their opinions, and finish it at full force.

There's no guarantee it will work. He had no confidence in convincing Usagi's parents.

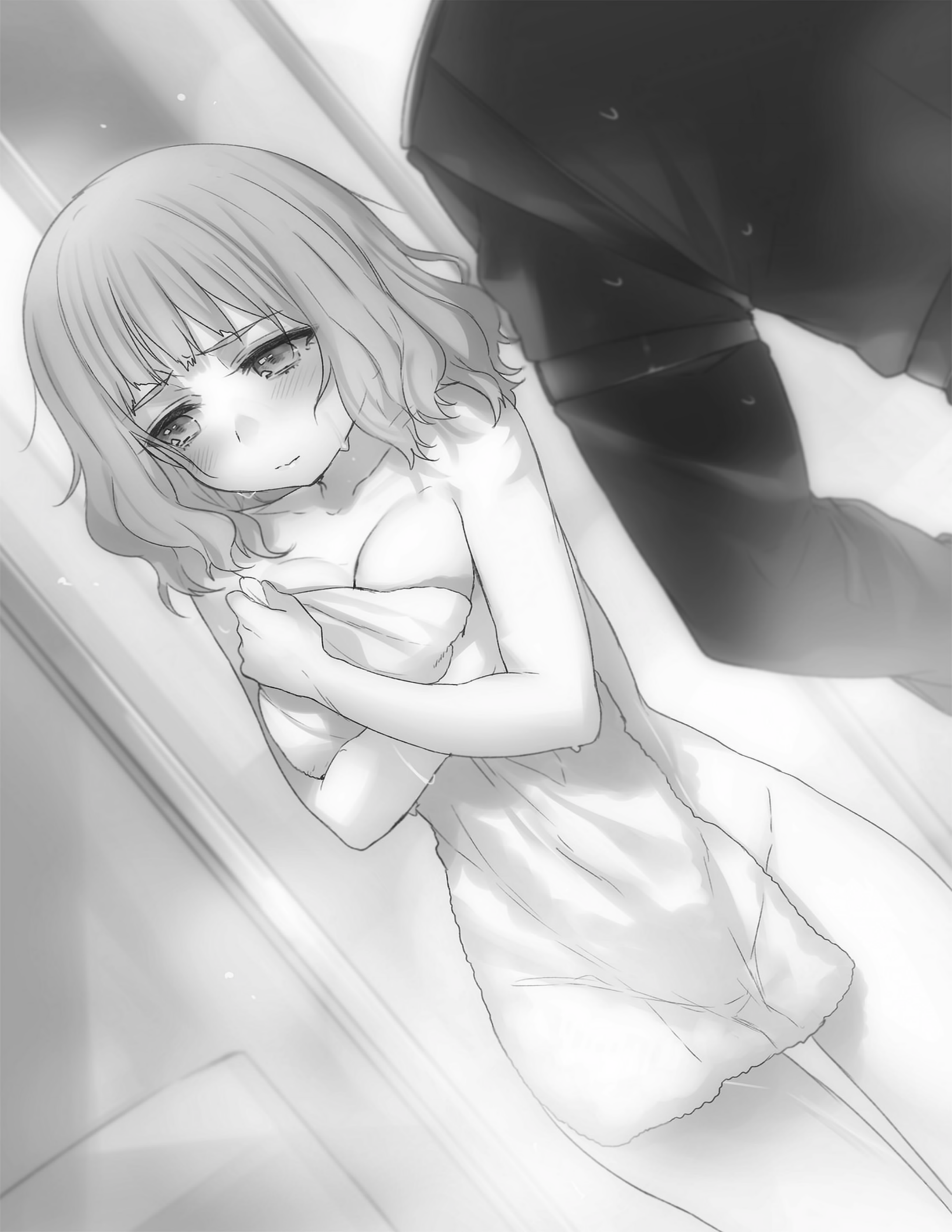
However, if it was possible it might succeed, they will at least hear them out.

That was why, there was something he had to do.

Takeru murmured "all right", and hit the palm of his left hand with his right fist.

That's when the bath's door opened and Usagi came out from it.

"Oh, you're out. Sorry about the bath being so small——wha…"



When he turned his line of sight towards Usagi who came out, he solidified.

He could not believe his eyes, Usagi stood naked with just a bath towel covering her chest.

"Y-yo-you, w-why are you... naked?"

"...A...uu... because... I left my clothes... so I'm not wearing them."

Usagi averted her line of sight.

Takeru thought 'no good'.

Before he noticed Usagi had already left bathroom and entered the room, she finished her bath while he was lost in thought and he had only placed a bath towel in the dressing room. He forgot to place a change of clothes as well.

"Sorry about that! It's mine, but I'll get you a jersey right——"

"...don't bother..."

"Ehh?!"

Why?! He retorted instinctively.

Usagi dropped her line of sight lower, her eyes were watery and her face flushed. She continued shyly.

"Because... I'll end up... naked anyway."

............why?! He retorted instinctively.

He rose up and tried to recall where he put the jersey at.

But he couldn't look away from Usagi's body and concentrate on thinking.

"U-umm...Kusanagi..."

Usagi took a single step forward anxiously.

Stopitthisisnogood. Don't come over here. If you come closer as a man I will——

At that moment, since she didn't wipe her body well and droplets fell on tatami, Usagi slipped.

Takeru moved reflexively and hugged her body.

It was inevitable, the two were behind closed doors and they froze while hugging each other.

*N-no good... this situation is not good at all...*

He was in close contact with Usagi's skin, it was soft, wet and incredibly hot.

Her slightly trembling shoulders, wet hair, moist lips. The swelling which pressed against him felt deadly and pleasant even though they were separated through clothing...

Usagi shook her hair and looked up at Takeru from under him.

"I-it's my... first time, I don't... know what to do."

"Fueee?"

Her expression looked so lovely it was deadly, he didn't know what was going on, and she said in a very miserable voice.

"That's why I will... leave it to Kusanagi, is that fine?"

"W-wait... don't rush it. What are you talking about...!"

"............?"

"Why do you have such a wondering expression. Could you explain how did it come to this."

As Takeru said that, Usagi opened her eyes wide seemingly in shock.

And, after her eyes wandered for a moment she then grasped Takeru's clothes tightly.

"Horrible... for me to be cornered this far."

"............!!!"

"Don't... shame me any more than this."

Her watery eyes looking from below. And these were words no man would be able to resist.

Takeru was no exception. Although he had confidence in his own rationale, he didn't think he would be cornered this far.

THIS IS BAD. These were the words that floating in his head. He stared at her for few seconds. Eventually Usagi raised her chin a little and closed her eyes.

Pale pink and very moist lips released warm breath.

Takeru's body moved naturally as well, he gently closed in on Usagi's lips with his own.

And,

"Takkeru〜〜〜♪ Good evening〜〜〜♪ I came over to play but your interphone is brokeeen!"

———And with this impossible timing, the room's door opened all at once. What appeared, was Mari who had a smile comparable to a sunflower on her face.

"Haa... when I was here for the last time it was a haunted place but it seems like nothing strange happens at Takeru's room ri...gh...t..."

Mari took of her shoes and entered the room as Takeru and Usagi hugged each other. Their eyes met. And next was,

"Hey you! You should at least knock! As they say, a hedge in between keeps friendship green... you left your shoes untidily too... seriously."

After tidying up the shoes Mari took off, Ouka entered the room.

And their eyes met. In addition,

"It's been four years since I was outside of the school, I didn't think the second place I'll visit would be Kusanagi's room... it might be abrupt, but let's look for ero books, ero books it is!"

Ikaruga rowdily stepped into his room while wearing the usual dreamy expression. And their eyes met.

"""............"""

Feeling that blood will be shed soon, Takeru was about to cry. Usagi in his chest too, opened and closed her mouth in shock.

That's why this situation was no good, and Takeru repeated this in his head over and over again.

"I...I told you going that far with ero is no good... unless it's with me...!"

"Kusanagi, so you are that kind of guy... I really tried to think you aren't like that... but you really...!"

"Why...? Kusanagi... Usagi... why, just the two of you...!"

The three got angry respectively, the voltage had increased.

Takeru prepared for the onslaught that was to take place after this, he moved away from Usagi and took a defensive posture. He couldn't use Soumatou. Although he wanted to say he wasn't at fault, but he couldn't deny his passion from a moment ago, so he resigned himself——

"This cheater——!!"

"So you really are a skirt chaser——!!"

"I told you to include me into the mix——!!"

"I beg you! Just don't kick my vital points——hannnn!!"

Looking like demons——the trio seemed to be a trance——and jumped right at him, Takeru was kicked in that which symbolized his manhood.

Under the grieving night sky, painful cries of Takeru's agony rang out.

Takeru was rolling around while receiving kicks, after he desperately finished explaining the situation. He faced the platoon members while in seiza.

About Usagi's home. Her fiancée. And that she didn't want to quit school.

After obtaining her consent, they heard the story from Usagi herself.

"——Just marry Kusanagi already, make two kids, kids I say."

That was the first thing that left Ikaruga's mouth.

**pishin** Takeru who was covered in blue bruises pointed at Ikaruga.

"Yes, dismissed! Think! Seriously! Right now!"

**pishin** **pishin** **pishin** **pishin**, he continued to move the finger pointing at Ikaruga.

"I am serious, your marriage is welcome. I want to be the mistress of course, I would be the mistress for both of you."

"I have no intention of taking you as a mistress even if I were about to die...!!"

"? Then marry me instead?"

"That's not the problem! And don't put up an expression as if you're really considering it you dumbass!"

Takeru got angry at her and blood vessels appeared on his temple.

And the person in question, Ikaruga acted like she didn't notice it.

"I think having children is a good idea. Kusanagi aside, if it's Usagi's children then they will be cute right? They'll be lovely〜? Look, Usagi has big breasts so there will be no problems with the child's growth——"

"The boob size and the children's growth have nothing to do with each other right?! Children can drink from small ones as well with no problem—!! The small ones can compete with big ones when it comes to nutritional value!"

"...why did Nikaido go berserk at that point."

"Shut up, you're annoying me! In the first place, the marriage is out of the question!! Mother is not going to forgive it!"

It seemed like Mari became mother, sat down cross-legged and pouted. Ouka also followed and growled while crossing her arms.

"M-marriage is... as expected. Certainly, you're almost at age where you can marry, but you two are still students. Also, for you to marry for such a reason... you two should more... uhh, love... confirm your love for each other rather than..."

"Confirm each other's love... in other words, do it once."

"?! ?! I-I d-didn't mean it like that! I thought so before, but Suginami is too vulgar! A-a-as a maiden!"

Ouka's voice turned into that of an innocent girl.

Seeing Ouka like that, Ikaruga smiled with an ecstatic look.

It was the usual scene. At this rate the talk would have shifted in a completely different direction.

Wanting to correct it, Takeru tried to open his mouth,

"...umm."

Usagi raised her hand timidly.

"Why everyone here in the first place...?"

She muttered an elementary question, and looked at the three who came to Takeru's room.

The trio stared at Takeru. And he started over and faced towards them.

"I'm the one who called them. I though we should hold a strategical meeting."

Strategical meeting? Usagi made a questioning expression.

Ouka and the others expected such a talk, so they listened in silence.

"——Commencing the Saionji Usagi rescue operation meeting."

Hearing Takeru's declaration, Usagi couldn't believe her ears.

"The contents of the strategy is to get results during the Witch-Hunting festival to convince the Saionji house, it's to try to convince her parents. In the case they aren't persuaded by the fact we earned points, I want you to help me find alternative options."

Seeing Takeru's serious expression, Usagi's eyes shook faintly.

"If it's like this, we need to go all out during the Witch-Hunting festival. Our comrade is having a crisis, all of us have to do our best."

"That's what I intended from the very beginning, but it seems like we're no longer allowed to fail... very well, let's go at full force."

"It will be lonely without Usagi-chan. I'll help out as well."

"I'm not happy about getting points without actual combat... but if Saionji drops out it will be troubling. I might be inexperienced but let me lend a hand."

Everyone's opinion matched, and the 35th test platoon rose up.

Usagi was speechless, and just stared at everyone.

"If you leave it to me, it'll end up bad. We need a solid foundation."

"...isn't this woman's anxiety indicate just the opposite, that she's eager to do it? Let's think about someone else. Ootori Ouka, you're Chairman's daughter so you can do something right? Use authority, authority!"

"Uu... well, I thought about that as well. But I want to save it as the last resort. That person is not reliable. The result might not be good at all... it's a double-edged sword."

"It should be fine even if we don't use the Chairman's authority. It will definitely succeed right?"

It became a huge commotion as everyone brainstormed and proposed their ideas.

"...auu."

Usagi couldn't endure it, and looked down alone.

Tears spilled. Emotions raged within her chest, and she could no longer bear it.

She thought that this is the place she belongs to once again. And she gave up on her home. She couldn't run away endlessly, be at their mercy and tied to them until she dies. These were her vague thoughts.

Even though she gave up, they were doing their best for her sake.

They wanted her to stay with them. They needed her. For that reason, she needed to borrow their strength.

For Usagi, being needed by someone, was something to be happy about, there was nothing else like that.

As she quietly cried, Takeru placed his big hand on her head.

"If we can't help it with just the two of us... if we try all together, it will work out somehow."

"...Kusanagi."

"You're not alone, I'm here too."

"...but, I... there's nothing I can give you all in return... I am just dragging your feet... just keep getting helped..."

Usagi's head which was still lowered, was hit with a fist.

"Idiiot."

"Wh-what are you doing～"

"...do you know just how many times you saved our lives?"

Takeru said while being a bit angry.

"During the battle with Hero your sniping saved me, who was fighting with his own flesh and blood. I would have been killed if not for you."

"…………"

"It was the same during the tournament. When I was lying all beat up, you saved Ootori and Mari even though your eye was crushed."

"…………"

"In the fifth laboratory, you made a crack on the dragon's back. Because you hit that shell, I was able to stab my sword in."

Takeru reached towards Usagi's head again, and this time he stroked it slowly and gently.

"Because you were there, we are alive right now."

"…………uuu."

"We will need you in the future as well. That's why I gathered everyone like this. I think you should know that."

After hearing Takeru's speech, Usagi started to cry aloud. It was a much more spectacular cry.

All the members were startled, and for some reason they blamed Takeru for it.

"Takeru! What did you say to Usagi-chan!"

"Geez, you probably said something rotten to her anyway right? What are you going to do with her crying like this... yes yes, there there, don't cry."

Ikaruga and Mari tried to calm her down.

Certainly, it might have been a bit rotten. Takeru scratched his cheek with a wry smile.

"Speaking of which, Kusanagi... Saionji's fiancée, is he attending our school?"

Despite the fact the other two were by Usagi, Ouka remained near him.

"I don't know the details, but he seems to be Usagi's childhood friend."

"Hmm... do you know his name?"

"Yeah, Tenmyouji Reima. Witch-Hunting festival's executive committee chairman. It's the guy who delivered the speech in the morning."

"———"

"What is it?"

"............no, it's nothing."

Ouka looked away from Takeru and narrowed her eyes seriously.

Takeru was a bit worried about that, but he didn't think about it deeply at the moment.

After that Ouka stayed at the strategy meeting with everyone, and then left to do work she was asked to do by the student council, she was the only one who went home.

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### The Glossary

**Install** (インストール) - It's written as (憑依) meaning "Possession" .

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# Chapter 4 - I, And the Place for Me to Be In

The next day, the second day of school festival preparation.

"A move we thought of to ensure our victory——its name is, cosplay cabaret... cosplay social meet!"

It had been a day since the platoon members had stayed in Takeru's room, all the members of the allied platoons had aligned and shouted with a loud voice as instructed to by Ikaruga.

Silence... the classroom was dead calm. Takeru's mouth convulsed violently as well.

Just now she... said cabaret...

They were planning a cosplay event, and truth be told he knew about it. But a cabaret was unexpected.

"You just clearly said cabare——"

"It's a social meet! A watering hole! It's not some kind of shady shop!"

"...should we do a café after all?"

"Haa?!"

Hearing Ikaruga's serious voice, Takeru involuntarily stepped back.

"What's fun about having a girl dressed in cosplay bring you a tea?! The only thing that would differ from normal cafe would be the clothes and stupid rock-paper-scissors games right?!"

"No... I don't get it."

"I'm not interested in such a piss-easy business! Listen okay!? The target are men who normally have little contact with women! They want some 'Kyaa kyaa ufufu'! It's a place for people who look for something like that!"

"Don't arbitrarily pick a target... but if that's the case ain't cosplay unnecessary...?"

Mari protested against that decision.

"You must be joking! What you need to earn money——is ERO!"

It seemed like cosplay led straight to eros, thought Takeru.

"Iiit's all righttt. Touching is strictly prohibited, if you happen to be touched we can overcharge them. Talk with them, drink tea with them! It's only watching!"

Ikaruga held her hand up triumphantly.

The interim leader's glasses flashed and he raised his hand.

"There are a lot of problems, however... there's one, the most important thing."

"What. Go on and say it."

An intense atmosphere filled the classroom, and sparks appeared between the two in question.

"——Taking photos, is it allowed?"

**ching*, the interim leader's glasses flashed again.

"——Of course it's OK. However, we're gonna charge for them! The price is going to depend on the pose!"

"——Win, gentlemen we're gonna win this! It's an ingenious plan utilizing the SAGA of men!"

After reaching a mutual understanding, Ikaruga and the interim leader shook hands.

Takeru couldn't keep up with it, but the boys from the other platoons reluctantly agreed with wry smiles.

"If the girls are fine with it... but isn't this a bit high level?"

"I guess. But we can attach photos to the advertisement leaflets... and if it isn't high level customers won't come right? For a variety of reasons, not many people want to enter this school."

"But it's amateur cosplay. What about make-up and clothes, we don't have any knowledge about that kind of thing right?"

While everyone agreed, they all voiced their worries about it too.

But Ikaruga wonderfully dispelled their doubts.

"——Who do you think I am?!"

As she said so, she extended a hand towards a platform that held a simple dressing room hidden behind a curtain.

After hearing the state of inside, she opened the curtains vigorously.

""""""WOAAAAAAAAAAA?!""""""

There, were the spectacularly transformed figures of girls.

"Su-Suginami! Don't open it suddenly like that! I still haven't given an OK to this dress-up!"

The first one in front was Ouka.

First thing that they saw, was red color. The costume that matched the hair color of Ouka's was made of delicate silk.and was sticking closely to her skin. It emphasized the form of Ouka's breasts even more, and they was clearly visible.

And just as eye-catching were her beautifully curved legs.

An oddly short skirt and slits cut around the chest and her waist.

That costume was exposing so much of her skin and her figure that everything was 'almost' visible. It was a wickedly modified china dress.

"Her chest is good, but Ootori's main attribute are her legs. To make the most out of it, I thought of this!"

"D-d-don't decide on people's worth like that!"

"The skirt's length and the slit is almost an overkill, but it's not supposed to show everything. Having a bit of it hidden adds more ero to it. It's very deep. Look at these thighs. Don't they make you want to snuggle them?"

"You bastards! Stop ogling me like that!"

After pushing aside Ouka who yelled at the group of male students, Ikaruga said "Yes, next one." and pulled another person in front.

"〜〜〜〜! Come on...! You know very well that I'm small at various places...! No matter how I look at this its a no go... Suginamiii!!"

It was Mari's advent, a cheer was raised from the men's group again.

Mari was wearing a swimsuit, but it wasn't a normal one. It was a traditional swimsuit handed down from the ancient times of old Japan. A swimsuit which had a sad history and disappeared before anyone noticed, a precious heritage.

A school swimsuit. Also, 'Mari' was carefully written on the name tag at her chest.

It wasn't all. At her head, and her buttocks, there were cat ears and a fluffy tail. Moreover, both ear and tail were moving as if they were real.

"Okay, this is what some people who aren't interested in legs nor big tits want——is that right?"

"Drop that smug face of yours—!!"

"Even the lack of something can be a good point. Why is it a school swimsuit? Because it promotes immorality... and tempts you to perform mischief."

"Try it and I'll fucking kill you! And don't call me a loli just because I don't have breasts! I'm NOT loli and NO touching!"

"Both tail and cat ears were created with use of magic investigation equipment and can move in response to the magic in her body. A cosplay only a witch can do, isn't that innovative? Another option would be a red randosel. With it a smell of a crime and immorality would spike up! And we can charge extra for it."

"I'm definitely not putting it on! I will NEVER put that thing on okay?!"

Yes yes yes, move aside. Ikaruga pushed Mari away.

"Next one is an unofficial participant and a special guest～. A very poor one who has nothing left. The following is very simple."

With that said, next girl moved in front, it was...

"..........."

Takeru snorted unintentionally. It was Lapis.

《"——I've been told there's not enough participants."》

《"I was wondering why haven't I seen you for the past few days, why have you come out at such a time?!"》

《"I've been undergoing a routine adjustment in the facility. When I came back I was called out to by Suginami-sama."》

As they spoke through magic resonance, Lapis stared at Takeru expressionlessly.

The members of the other platoons stared at Lapis with puzzled expressions and were asking "who?".

And her appearance, was maniac too.

She was wearing a large shirt on top. And nothing below. Although it was a so-called boy's shirt on naked body, the problem was that the shirt was wet and semi-transparent.

"A white shirt after coming out of bath... a man's romance, isn't it. It suits her childish figure, a super cute loli in too-big and dripping wet clothes. This shirt, even though it seems to be wet, it's actually made of see-through material. And yes, you there, no matter how hard you look you won't see her breasts. It's made so that those areas aren't visible. Ah, but, she's not wearing anything below. It's literally a see through naked shirt getup."

?! Some of the men opened their eyes wider.

"I know what you want to say. Just this much is quite plain. That's why I'm going to say what options are there."

And there, she hit Lapis shoulder while saying 'come on'.

After being tapped on the shoulder, she tilted her head while remaining expressionlessly.

"——Can I sleep together with you today Onii-chan?"

**gofuoo*! Some boys from the alliance fell down and started vomiting blood.

And after that, Ikaruga showed off the cosplay girls one after another.

All the other boys raised a ruckus from excitement, Takeru felt sorry for his platoon members. Normally he would have hit Ikaruga, however, he couldn't do it because there was the matter of Usagi, even though he was anguished he had to approve it.

He felt like crying when he though about his comrades' feelings.

"Calm down right now. The next one is the last. My masterpiece."

Ikaruga laughed fearlessly.

"In this world, things that cannot be either classified as big or small exist. There are those who are both small and big at the same time, at first it might look unbalanced, but this is the final form that takes all these elements to extreme. The figure which shines as the one that has the best and miraculous style——is this."

Prompted by Ikaruga, a girl came out timidly.

Takeru was watching the girls with feeling similar to sympathy, but this time he blushed.

"...u-umm... this... is properly covering... is it...?"

Hesitantly, the girl went in front with flushed cheeks.

It was Usagi. On top of her head were huge rabbit ears, they were made of a fluffy material. A bunny girl. However, that's was the only orthodox part.

"Uuuuu... uuuuuuuu..."

The majority of Usagi's skin was visible. What she was wearing was no leotard nor tights. It was no longer clothes.

The essential parts were hidden, and what was hiding them——were medical patches.

There were patches, that were fluffy like feathers pasted all over her.

Moreover, they weren't covering much. The very limit indeed.

The patches were affixed into important parts of her body, and although they were looking like a pattern, the fact was that it was no different from being naked.

"T-this is the worst... being in such an outfit... in front of gentlemen...!"

Looking as if she was about to cry any moment, Usagi looked down.

Even so, she tried to put up with it because her comrades were doing the same for her. She couldn't be the only one who said no.

But, it was still... too much.

*...that's too erotic...*

Even as Takeru criticized Ikaruga in his mind, his eyes were glued to Usagi.

Usagi looked at Takeru as tears started to flow from his eyes.

"I-I... can no longer... be a bride..."

Feeling shameful and stained, Usagi raised a hand to her mouth.

After enjoying Usagi's appearance, everyone looked towards Ikaruga.

With a face that made it seem like they ascended, they gave her a thumbs up.

Ikaruga also returned the thumbs up to them in a dignified move.

"Wonderful! Perfect! I'm really glad we invited the Small Fry Platoon to the alliance!"

"The variations are amazing Suginami! No, let me call you Suginami-san!"

In response to the applause and praises, Ikaruga said "Of course!" and puffed her chest while looking smug.

"Tell us whatever you need! If we can do it, then whether its chores or anything, we'll do it all!"

"Girls just need to display their bodies! We will do all the rest!"

A question mark appeared above Ikaruga's head.

"What are you saying. You guys are going to dress up as well?"

Dress up...? Men will cosplay as well?

In the world there was something like a butler café. However, inviting women into a shop that mainly targeted men was impossible. There was only one classroom they could use, and they couldn't do both of them at once.

Then, what clothes were they supposed to change into?

Just as everyone thought of that,

"We still don't have a cross-dressing boy here."

———Something outrageous came out of Ikaruga's mouth.

"N-no, Suginami-san... as expected, that's impossible."

"Y-yeah. As you can see, we're far from being beautiful... there's no baby face here, right?"

The boys urged Ikaruga to think calmly.

"Rest assured. My make-ups are perfect. No matter how manly you are, you'll be a pretty girl when I'm done with you"

Seeing the grin on Ikaruga's face, everyone froze.

And then everyone turned into enemies to one another, all the men looked at each other. They looked for a sacrifice. There was no need for two cross-dressing guys. One should be enough.

A hot guy, where's the hot guy. Where's the baby face. If there's a guy like that, we'll be saved.

And everyone's line of sight——was directed towards Takeru.

"No, that's impossible right!? Why are you glaring so scornfully at me guys! Also, I've quite a bit of muscles?!"

"A slim macho. No problems."

Ikaruga's eyes were sparkling and she showed an 'okay' sign with her fingers.

"L-look at my face, isn't it manly?! I-if I get in a drag with my face that looks like that of a criminal's, won't the customers run away?!"

"Certainly you have mean eyes, but you've got quite a baby face, Kusanagi. Aren't you aware of that?"

"N-no way, spare me——"

The moment Takeru tried to escape towards the exit, his shoulders were strongly grabbed from behind.

It was Ouka dressed in a china dress and Mari in a swimsuit.

Their eyes started glowing like that of a beast and they were surrounded by a red aura, the two performed a nelson hold on Takeru.

"Let go! I don't want to! Thinking normally it's impossible!"

"We had to go this far, and you, the captain think you can escape alone...? We can't let that pass, Kusanagi...!"

"Even I had to throw my pride away to go this far? You said you'll carry half of the burden right? Why don't you carry it now, Takeruu...!"

Ouka and Mari forcibly moved Takeru's face as he tried to escape and made him face towards Usagi.

"...Ku-Kusanagi."

Usagi was so embarrassed she was crying.

Even that nervous and shy Usagi was doing her best. Usagi had a lot of pride and yet she exposed herself in public while looking so shameless.

That Usagi did it.

——Aren't you ashamed, as a captain?

"U...gghhh."

Tears accumulated in Takeru's eyes and he clenched his teeth.

He gave up on many things, and opened his eyes which were full of tears.

And in his mind, he apologized to his parents. I am sorry father, mother.

Takeru will... Takeru will become a girl.

"Ku...Kusanagi Double-Edged style... initiate! Kusanagi...Takeru! Shall discard——his manhood for today!"

Kusanagi Takeru threw away his pride as a man, as well as many other things.

Ten minutes later.

"Ahahahahahahahahahahahahahahahaha."

"Kyahahahahahahahahahahahahahahaha."

"...ppfu... kufu..."

In front of Takeru who was dressed up, Ikaruga and Mari laughed. Even Ouka looked away and held her mouth trying to desperately stop herself from laughing.

"............I don't care any more."

Depressed, Takeru stood in front everyone while tears flowed from his eyes.

His appearance, he had a dress laced with a lot of frills attached to it, a frilled headdress and knee-socks. It was the so-called gothic fashion.

"Not bad not bad, not bad at all. Kusanagi, you should have more confidence. That'll definitely earn some money."

"Yup, you're soo cute! Takeko-chan!"

"You're more... of a maiden than me... bffuu!"

"What's up with your tone?! Want me to draw it?! Want me to draw my sword?!"

His get-up which was a gothic fashion, the attached sword could only be seen as a gag now. Next to the three who broke into laughter was Lapis who stared at Takeru.

《"Matching."》

**bzz** she spoke to him through magical resonance.

《"It's what they call a pair look, is it not."》

《"At least you don't say things like that...!"》

《"If I am to objectively state my impressions, I think it doesn't look weird. Thanks to Suginami-sama's ability, your look is completely like that of a woman."》

《"That doesn't make me happy!"》

Takeru retorted to Lapis while crying.

However, certainly Takeru's appearance was that of a girl. Although his shoulders were quite broad and he had a stern look on his face, thanks to Ikaruga unleashing all of her skills, he turned into a slightly tall and sharp-eyed girl in gothic fashion.

As a proof, all the boys who saw Takeru's transformation said in unison,

""""Lovely...""""

"——You're all out of your minds!"

In the end, Takeru's photo in a drag was added into the advertisement leaflet.

The time passed rowdily as he was being teased by the guys from the alliance.

After Ikaruga's cosplay showcase was over, everyone rushed to start to decorate the classroom,

"Ah—wait wait～! Don't change yet—! Look what the girls from our platoon found in the warehouse!"

The captain of the 23rd platoon, Ishida slipped back into the classroom.

As everyone's line of sight gathered, Ishida raised a square device she had in her hand.

"A polaroid camera! It's vintage, but can't we take everyone's pictures with this?"

"Agreed! Memories, memories!"

"It fits with like something of an ordinary school. Why not."

"It's not like we gather like this often."

"This dropout alliance is something formed for a limited time right?"

"By all means! The Small Fry Platoon in the middle if you could! I'll turn it into a family heirloom!"

While the folks from other platoons were in favor, the Small Fry Platoon members looked at each other.

"I'm not quite satisfied with a polaroid, but I want my art to remain for the future generations."

Ikaruga showed her support with 'it can't be helped' feel.

Mari's eyes shined, she raised her hand and agreed with it.

"I also agree! We don't have many chances to take photos〜."

"...t-taking pictures in such an outfit...? A-as expected, this is a bit..."

"Since there'll be lots of pictures taken on the day itself, just give up already."

"However... this is extremely shameless."

"It's fine, come on! Let's go!"

Mari pushed Ouka's back and they moved to the center of the shooting.

Takeru followed them with a bitter smile as well.

"............"

Only Usagi looked at their backs and stood behind.

Is it really all right for me to be there. That's the thought that entered her mind.

The reason the Small Fry Platoon participated in the Witch-Hunting festival seriously was because of Usagi's circumstances. That was why Usagi intended to do her best, endure the shame and embarrassment and do her best as well.

That was why she was unsure whether she belonged in that circle.

She was receiving their help, so she wasn't supposed to have fun.

As she thought that way.

"Come on〜 Usagi-chan! Hurry up and comee! What are you doing!"

Mari pointed in the middle and gestured Usagi to come.

"Saionji, don't dawdle. Also, stand in front of me. I don't want my legs photographed."

Ouka frowned with a discontent face and also beckoned her.

"Usagi, make haste and come. You've the leading role in this project."

Ikaruga encouraged her to take a place alongside others as she obsessively adjusted the camera.

In the end,

"Captain's orders, hurry up and come here. You're embarrassed, so am I and everyone else. It's our joint responsibility. That's why, hurry up."

Takeru, dressed in a gothic lolita fashion stood with dignity, it seemed like his composure was restored as he called Usagi.

"…………"

Happy after being accepted, Usagi started to cry lightly.

"I-I don't need you to remind me to come. Don't rush me please."

Despite being dressed in an embarrassing manner, Usagi proudly puffed her chest and briskly ran towards where everyone was waiting.

As expected, she was placed in the very center.

"Aaa〜〜...... this is e-embarrassing after all..."

As she shrunk in shame, **pop** Takeru placed a hand on her head.

"Well, it's just for today right. It should be fine."

"H-however..."

"Also, it really suits you. Though, it is way too erotic."

"Whaat?! Ero—?!"

Flustered, Usagi looked at Takeru's face. He looked down at her and made a mean smile. It made her angry.

"Kusanagi is erocute as well. If you shave all the body hair no one would ever think you're a man."

"Nghh.... don't say it."

"Hmph."

Seeing Usagi puff up her cheeks, Takeru laughed merrily.

"All right, it's perfect... in 5 seconds!"

That's when Ikaruga finally set up the camera and set the timer before running over to join them.

And like that, she threw herself at and tried to embrace the whole Small Fry Platoon.

"Wai—! Suginami, it's dang——gyaa!"

"Howaa?!"

"Dumbasss——doahh?!"

The Small Fry Platoon lost their balance and everyone, including Lapis hugged Usagi.

Everyone who stood behind them also shouted and opened their mouths raising an "Aa—."

That moment, the camera's shutter sounded and a photo came out of the polaroid camera.

It looked very strange, the Small Fry Platoon embracing each other as they lost balance, it was a very misshapen photo.

However, all the boys and girls caught in the picture all had smiling faces appropriate for their age.

After the photo-shoot was finished, Ouka left the classroom and walked through the courtyard alone.

She was contacted by the student council's secretary, Sendou Shizuka who cooperating with her in the Tenmyouji Reima investigation.

"During the month he was here, the number of Magical Heritage Tenmyouji Reima has seized does not match the report. The Spriggan didn't look up the details of seized goods on the inspection and he passed by easily. What is the most unnatural, is the astounding amount of goods he seized in just a month."

《"So it's like that after all... with the body of an ordinary human body which doesn't have a phantom instrument, he can't use magic. That's why he's bringing Magical Heritage to school, in order to use it as a weapon."》

Ouka frowned while holding her cellphone next to her ear.

"Also, some of the seized Magical Heritages and adamantium that were stored in safe-boxes disappeared."

《"The recovered Magical Heritages should've been stored in safe-boxes to prevent leakage."》

"...I apologize, that's all I have."

《"We've harvested something as well. We were monitoring Tenmyouji Reima but, please look at this photo."》

Sendou sent an image to Ouka's mobile phone.

That was a scenery of a classroom prepared for Witch-Hunting festival.

However, on the edge of the photo was Reima speaking with a girl.

As she zoomed in, she saw Reima retrieve something that looked like money and stuffing it in his pocket. As she increased the resolution further, she saw some kind of pattern on the center of it.

"A magic circle... that's a charm magic enchantment."

《"Yeah. This confirms that Tenmyouji Reima is Mephisto."》

"As expected of you... but tailing him must've been incredibly dangerous, my apologies."

《"We're the ones who's relying on your help. We should be the ones to apologize."》

"Still, as a member of the student council, you should've been in a safe place together with President."

《"...fufu, worrying about me? That's unexpectedly gentle of you. President said so before, but I intend on joining the Banshee."》

When she said that, Ouka was convinced.

Banshees be killed after being discovered.

Still, they still entered the jaws of death without fear, they understood that gathering information was the cornerstone of investigations and took upon it themselves to fulfill that mission.

They were even willing to sacrifice themselves for information. That was the Inquisition's Banshee.

"I was unable to obtain any useful information, my apologies."

《"There's no such thing. Also, it's all right as long as we know. Although it's part of enemy's plan, I think the Witch-Hunting festival system is interesting. Make sure you earn a lot of points and help Saionji-san. By the way, the china dress looked really good on you."》

Sendou changed her tone, and laughed gently.

"Wha... why do you—?!"

《"I'm a Banshee applicant. No need to worry. As promised, if Tenmyouji tries to get close to your companions, I'll protect them even at the cost of my life. You do want to protect your wonderful comrades, don't you."》

As she was told that, Ouka growled slightly.

When she decided to lend them a hand, Ouka asked Sendou to tail Reima and told her to immediately attack him if he was to do anything to her comrades.

However, she didn't expect their circumstances to be known. Surely, it wasn't just Tenmyouji Reima, but Ouka and the others were monitored as well.

They placed transmitters on everyone... she doesn't trust me this much? That lazy woman!

It's all for the sake of protecting you folks—. She heard Nagaru's faint voice.

She swallowed the anger and tried to calm down.

《"Let's aim at the moment during which Tenmyouji is alone. We'll probably arrest him in the evening, I'll contact you again later."》

"Understood."

《"Let me say so in advance, please proceed with caution. The most terrifying thing about that guy, is the fact that he inherits the memory of the people he is in."》

"...memory?"

《"That's the reason he was able to take down the student council. He keeps the memory, he had access to the extensive list of exchanges and relationships as well as information known only to the student council. Even if the soul changed, the brain remained the same. Since he has all the memory of the possessed target, he can imitate that person and easily prepare an alibi. That's why, turn a deaf ear no matter what that guy says."》

If what Sendou said was true, then he was truly a menace.

Even if the soul changes, the person is still the same. It's different from mimicry and disguise. The memories inside of the body are the same as original. There was no way to differentiate.

《 "For Mephisto to possess someone, he probably needs to touch the other party, so avoid approaching. Try to put him to sleep with anesthetic bullets, and if that's impossible - shoot to kill."》

"Understood."

After finishing the call, she folded the mobile.

She made a tired sigh and walked through the crowded school grounds that were in middle of preparations.

Somehow, Ouka was a bit lonely. The truth was that she wanted the 35th platoon to help out with this mission, but there was a possibility of them being targeted if they engaged in it. The enemy is a monster that consumes the souls of people he touches. She couldn't allow her comrades to engage against someone like that.

Just this time, it was the best to do these things alone.

Thanks to the research they did over the last two days, they confirmed Reima's guilt. If she arrests him, it will also help with the matter of Usagi's engagement, it was killing two birds with one stone. "How about a trade-off?" that's what she said to the president, asking her to have Witch-Hunting festival continue after Reima was arrested. Nagaru had a weird look on her face, and agreed with something that simple.

The reason she asked Nagaru about that, was because if Reima is arrested and Witch-Hunting festival is cancelled, they won't be able to earn points. Even if the engagement were to be cancelled, it didn't mean Saionji house would cancel Usagi's drop out.

In any case, it was all for Usagi's sake.

*...however, somehow.*

Ouka thought about how she, herself has changed.

The Ouka from before would turn deaf ears to her comrade's family circumstances and wouldn't have participated in Witch-Hunting festival no matter what.

She has realized that she's been enjoying the Witch-Hunting festival.

I don't hate this kind of atmosphere, is what she thought.

Of course, she didn't want to dress in such a shameful costume but doing things with other people of the same age that weren't related to battle wasn't bad. The feelings she has never tasted before in her life were itching.

*How foolish I am.*

She smiled wryly reminded of her own miserableness. The times when she was being called Calamity seemed like a lie. She hasn't been called that way recently.

Ouka sighed and shook her head when she thought of her own change.

The school was still very lively. There were those who assembled the tents. Those who prepared food ingredients. Whether it was decorations, people who drew pictures on grounds and walls, it was a fresh, unusual sigh.

However, at the same time. She felt something uncomfortable.

"......?"

She stopped her feet and looked towards the middle of the school yard.

The placement of stalls. The idea's for decorations. Regular intervals and the people who were leading others. There was a hidden harmony in their careless movements. The drawings on the walls and the ground turned into an unnatural pattern.

She hasn't noticed it until now, but something was... weird.

Ouka approached the students who were drawing a pattern on the ground.

"You guys... what are you doing?"

Proceeding with caution, she asked one of the female student.

The student was puzzled and looked up at Ouka casually.

"...decorations... preparing for the Witch-Hunting festival."

"Why are you drawing such a thing on the ground?"

It was just as Ouka said, it's position was too irregular to be called a decoration, it was a pattern that had an unknown meaning. Looking closely, the pattern continued and climbed the walls of the school building up to the roof. The students gondolas and hanged from the windows to paint the school's wall.

Weird. What are all of them doing?

"A different platoon proposed us to join a bigger project."

"Project? Is this a part of some kind of play?"

"Its rude to refer to Reima-sama's plan like that!"

When she heard Reima's name, Ouka was horrified.

"Since you're in the way, could you stop talking to me?!"

The female student went back to work, displeased. Other students were looking at Ouka strangely.

Ouka backed away slowly, turned on her heel and distanced herself.

"...Vlad, are you listening?"

While walking through the school grounds at a brisk pace, she questioned her Relic Eater.

《 "What is it, my tentative master. I have no intentions on keeping you company for a sideshow."》

"You must've heard it. It's not a sideshow, it's already confirmed that this is a case."

《"At this level, it is still a sideshow. Its not a level that would allow usage of Relic Eater."》

"I didn't say anything about summoning you! I just want to examine the entire school so lend me power!"

《"I am not a search-type. Sensing magic is out of my specialty."》

"Is it not possible for me fly in the sky? I need to take a good look at entire school from there."

《"Hmm... let's see."》

As she heard Vlad's reply, Ouka closed her eyes.

That moment, an experimental video came back. As if she was a bird, she looked down on the ground and vigorously rose up to the sky.

《"Although it's not part of my duties, I tried to imitate vision of a crow. How is it?"》

"So that's how it is after all."

Ouka's suspicion turned into conviction.

"It's a magical circle."

The paintings that were drawn by the students looked like geometric patterns. The unnatural positioning of the stalls. Although they were all meaningless by themselves, they all were small parts of something bigger, it could be easily recognized after looking from the sky.

Similar to the Nazca lines, a circular shape formed the magical circle.

《"Ohh. This doth seem they hast thought of something huge."》

"Do you know anything about the magic that's going to be invoked from this circle?"

《"For this current Master, I have no duty to serve in this manner. Fulfill the contract."》

"I get it, I'll do it myself."

Ouka focused on the scene Vlad showed her and began analyzing the magic.

She mobilized all the knowledge of magic she hoarded in order to use Vlad, she explored all magic whether it existed or was lost. The form, color, pattern, and the minor details in the characters.

After compiling all the information finding the magic she was interested in, Ouka started to panic.

"...what a thing...!"

《"Indeed, this magical circle is one that seizes the psyche. It's something beyond comparison to something like charm magic, it's dangerous."》

It was just as Vlad said. Charm magic depended on the caster himself, and it couldn't completely subjugate the target. Other spirit interference magic too, made it possible only to force them to do one action and the enchantment couldn't be maintained, they were at the level of hypnosis.

However, this was different.

Magic that dominated the psyche "Master-Slave" forced those who were caught in it into absolute obedience. It made them recognize what they are ordered as something that's correct to do, and move accordingly. Were they told to die, it would instill no doubts in their hearts, they would do it as if it was something perfectly normal.

Just by being caught in it once, there was no way to defy it.

It modified both emotions and the memory, it was impossible to cure it after being caught in it.

"If they manage to use magic on this scale, there's going to be a lot of damage...!"

《"The "Master-Slave" can only be used by a few people and requires an excessive amount of magic. However, if the caster can adapt it and use multiple sacrifices, the damage can go beyond the extent of school and extend to the entire city."》

Ouka took out her mobile phone and bit her lip.

The enemy's purpose wasn't killing the student council president.

It was to sacrifice the school, and all the people in the city——and use them as the advance attack.

At the same time as Ouka found the magical circle.

The second day of the Witch-Hunting festival preparation period, the evening came safely. Since it's become quite dim, there were lights affixed in the vicinity.

Since it was decided on suddenly, there could be only two days for preparation.

It was quite harsh, but considering all the circumstances it has been OK'd by everyone, and the school was busy be it day or night.

Takeru went to discard the unneeded goods to the incinerator, and left the classroom.

"............"

He was now in a school building with multi-purpose classrooms lined up.

As he passed by the second-year's classroom, he toured it while listening.

Everyone put on a puzzled expression, and the students spoke reluctantly.

Takeru walked down the quiet hallway. Although other school buildings were crowded with students, only this one was strangely quiet.

However, it didn't mean there were no signs of life, there must've been gold diggers in this school building as well. That's what his intuition told him.

That's when Tenmyouji Reima came out from the anti-magic medicine lab. He immediately noticed Takeru.

"Oh, Kusanagi, is it? What's up, coming to a place like this."

He had his usual refreshing smile on his face. Reima closed the classroom's door and put a key into the lock.

"...what about this place?"

As Takeru asked, Reima finished closing the door.

"I was looking around the unused classrooms. Some fellows wanted to make use of this classroom, but they weren't allowed because there are particularly dangerous chemicals in this laboratory. I checked it just in case."

This is also part of work of mine as executive committee member, said Reima.

"What about you? Don't tell me you're trying to use a classroom without a permission?"

"..........."

"That's no good. As a member of Witch-Hunting festival executive committee I can't overlook this... is what I want to say, but if there's anything you need then just tell me. Although I can't give you permission, I'll allow you to sneak around here a little."

Reima played around with the door's card key and smiled mischievously.

Seen in this light, he wasn't a bad person. On the surface he seemed like a good guy.

However, Takeru was skilled in sensing others' true nature. It wasn't an ability to sense someone's feelings but an intuition similar to that of animals' that told him whether the other person was harmless or not on their first meeting.

"Senpai. I have a question."

"Nn? What is it, you're so formal."

"——What did you do to Usagi?"

Abruptly, Takeru directed a question as sharp as a knife towards Reima.

Reima was dumbfounded, he blinked two, three times.

"...ehh, umm... what? Nothing really."

"She was scared of you, Senpai. In front of you, she started hyperventilating. That's not normal."

"...oh, is that so. But, Usagi must've been nervous meeting me after such a long time——"

"You're wrong. It's never been this bad. I've never seen her be that frightened as she was at that time."

Answer me, Takeru threatened him with his gaze.

At first, Reima scratched his cheek troubled, after a while he looked down quietly.

"...you got me there. I shouldn't have talked with you, who's taking care of Usagi. I didn't intend on keeping it from you, okay? It's just... difficult."

And, with a distant look on his face, Reima started to talk about the past.

"A long time ago, when I first met Usagi, I've been treating her badly. Although I was just a brat, but that's not an excuse for doing such horrible things. And it seems like it caused Usagi's trauma."

Admonishing himself, Reima clenched his fist.

"She... lost her brother and sister in an accident. With the two who were candidates for succeeding family's death, the responsibility of Saionji house's survival fell on her and Usagi needed to shoulder it."

Reima was indifferent, but he wasn't lying.

All of that, was true. That's what intuition told Takeru.

"As the second son of Tenmyouji, I was jealous of Usagi. My brother was outstanding, and my family saw only my brother, my family had no expectations of me as I grew up... when Usagi became the heir after her older siblings died... I was envious of her."

I said a lot of horrible things, Reima confessed again.

"Usagi was being pressured by responsibility, and while she was like that I made her hit rock bottom because of my jealousy. That's the truth... I can't deny it."

"..........."

"I... want to atone for it. You might have heard about it, I'm engaged to Usagi. It's something our parents have decided but... I'm serious about it."

Reima acting gentlemanly put a hand on his chest.

"From now onward, I'm going to give her everything. As my wife... I'm going to take care of her as her husband. She is my precious thing, that's why——"

"——That's it."

Sharply, Takeru stopped the flow of Reima's words. Reima responded with a puzzled expression and tilted his head slightly.

Takeru directed a sharp gaze that didn't change a bit ever since the beginning at Reima.

"I've been always pulled in by that. That's why I wanted to confirm it... but it's just as I thought, Tenmyouji Reima."

"...wait, what are you saying?"

"Stop lying. Peel off that disguise of yours."

In an instant, Takeru grabbed Reima's collar.

"Usagi is not an object. If you really though of her as someone important, you wouldn't treat her like an object. Also, I feel nothing from your words."

Takeru Understood. Even if it was like this guy said, and he fancied Usagi a lot, people don't reflect on their mistakes so easily. If he really was sorry about it, why did he leave Usagi alone up until now?

If he thought of Usagi as precious, he wouldn't ever call her a 'thing'.

Tenmyouji Reima continued to wound Usagi deeply in her mind. If she were to be trapped in Saionji's house and grow accustomed to living with this guy, she would break.

He absolutely couldn't allow that to happen.

"..........."

Reima looked surprised at first, but he gradually revealed his true nature.

Before Takeru noticed, Reima looked down at him haughtily.

"You got me... Kusanagi's a pretty sharp guy eh."

Takeru was not surprised, he expected this to be the true nature of Reima's.

"Can I ask you something? Kusanagi, what kind of relationship do you have with Usagi?"

"...ha?"

"The 'captain and subordinate' answer is out of question. I'm asking you what relationship do you have with her."

Completely looking down on him, Reima asked.

Without even thinking about it, Takeru said the truth.

"She's an important comrade of mine."

"——Pff... ku-kuhahahahahahahahaha."

Suddenly, Reima laughed.

"Comrades! And you even threw in "important"! Indeed, certainly a miserable misshapen like you will get along well with other bastards!"

After laughing so much until tears appeared in his eyes, Reima hit Takeru's shoulder.

"Like I said before, I'm her fiancée. We're going to marry, Usagi and I. I'm glad. If she's just a comrade of yours. If you were lovers I wouldn't know what to do. From now on for a life time, I'm going to indulge myself in her OK? Well, it's not like I'd take a no for an answer."

"You bastard...!"

Takeru went back to his original demonic manner and drew closer to Reima.

Reima didn't run away, he just put on a rude smile.

"No matter how much you deny it, Usagi belongs to me, she's my thing. Only mine."

"...!!"

"She's pretty pitiful. Not recognized by the members of her own family, no matter how much she does her best she won't get praised. Moreover, she has killed her own brother and sister with her own hands, can it get even more pathetic?"

After Reima revealed that, Takeru opened his eyes wide.

Usagi killed her brother and sister? What does that mean?

"The thing about it being an accident was a lie. The truth is... that she killed them."

"Say no more of this bullshit...! Or I'll——"

"Don't heat up like that. Well, She didn't intend to kill them. I know that she doesn't have that much courage. But all the folks over at Saionji think that Usagi killed them."

Reima happily said that Usagi's pathetic.

"She has no allies in that household. So don't just get on my case. That's why if Usagi becomes mine and gives them a kid, Saionji will be celebrating. That's when they'll sever their relation with Inquisition and get a post in the Ethics Committee."

"Usa...gi is not anyone's thing... nor a tool!"

Seeing Takeru's rage, Reima looked down at him with a relaxed smile.

"But it seems like you're misunderstanding. Even so, I love her. Her courage in stacking a wasted effort, or not ever being rewarded. That kind of thing seems irresistibly lovely to me. Don't worry Kusanagi, I'm going to properly protect her. I won't have anyone hurt her nor make her cry ever again. You have my guarantee."

"――――――"

"That's because she's my belonging! The only one who can hurt her or make cry is me! I have no intentions of giving her to anyone! That includes you!"

Reima's lips distorted with pleasure and madness appeared in his eyes.

Takeru's fist creaked. Truly, he didn't expect the man called Reima to be this broken. He absolutely couldn't pass Usagi to him.

"What's up, not going to hit me? Come on, what is it. I'm not going to resist."

Reima held out his cheek towards Takeru.

However, Takeru didn't hit him. And Reima withdrew.

"...I didn't come here to beat you up. Only to check how things are."

While staggering, Reima ridiculed Takeru.

"Hee, so you know what will happen to Usagi if you hit me, the son of Ethics Committee's Chairman. I'm impressed. You're surprisingly calm, aren't you?"

"Calm? Don't talk crap. I will use my full strength to stop you from taking Usagi. No matter what."

"Then, I'll use all my strength to take her away. I too, won't be picky when choosing the means."

After showing his tongue, Reima laughed atrociously, like a hypocrite. Takeru glared at him, and turned away.

"Nobody can sever my fate! In the near future, both Usagi and this school, all of it will be mine! Do your best and struggle!"

Takeru turned deaf ears to the crap Reima was spouting and went back to his own classroom.

"...don't get cocky. Know your place, trash."

When he was unable to see Takeru's back, Reima shook his head and sighed.

"After all, your life is going to end tomorrow. If you can't even grasp the current situation, you can't do anything. Kusanagi."

He fixed his uniform that was crooked after he was grabbed and opened the medicine laboratory with the card key once again.

The curtains were closed, and the lab was enveloped in darkness, it was barely visible.

However, the light coming from the corridor lit it up.

It resembled a female student, there were the two white legs of a Japanese girl.

These legs didn't move, they were dangling like that of a doll.

"...now then... although this place was nearly exposed, I somehow managed to fool him."

Reima placed his hand on the door and happily stared into the darkness of the laboratory.

"——Isn't it about time for you to change your body? Hey, you listenin'?"

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### The Glossary

**Master-Slave** (マスタースレーブ) - It's written as (奴隷の歌) meaning "Song of Slavery" .

# Chapter 5 - Rabbits Have Fangs Too

After changing her clothes and being coached on proper etiquette by everyone, Usagi escaped the classroom to prepare for a dinner.

"A-at this rate by being over there... my maiden's heart won't be able to withstand it."

Disheartened, she walked unsteadily down the hall.

Because her comrades were doing their best, she made a promise with Ikaruga saying that she'll wear any costume, but it was a mistake. She didn't expect it to be that extreme.

"...but."

Usagi smiled wryly and took out a photo from her breast pocket.

It was a photo taken during the dropout alliance's photo session. Although they had to take multiple shots to capture everyone, Usagi decided to take the very first; the failed photo.

Rather than the photos taken later in which everyone took a pose, the first one looked lovely to her. Everyone had such a lively expression.

"......it was fun."

She spoke out in secret and smiled. Although she did her best alone to be acknowledged by the Saionji household, being with her comrades was not only encouraging, but also fun.

Being needed by someone, and being in a place she was needed at. A place that made her feel at ease, a fun place.

If she's there, she can be herself. Usagi was very, very happy that she entered this school... and that she was placed in the 35th test platoon.

*Even if Father and Mother don't recognize it, I... will stay in this school.*

She decided to stop accepting whatever they said and decided to resist from now on. No matter how terrified she is, no matter how her body trembles in fear, she will no longer stand back and accept it.

Otherwise, she could never look her comrades in the eyes again.

And if Saionji house tries to lock her away, she will run away from home or whatever and defy them. Many ways of doing so (defying) have entered her head.

There's no need to be bound by anyone; Saionji Usagi doesn't belong to anyone.

"Now that I decided that, let's treat everyone to a delicious dinner! Fufufuu, I'm not just an exceptional sniper right? I'll have them taste my delicious cuisine made from common ingredients."

**oh ho ho**, Usagi laughed loudly and went outside heading to the cafeteria to purchase ingredients for dinner.

The day was already coming to an end, and the hallway was dim.

The hustle and bustle made by students immersed in preparations could be heard in the distance.

"...weird, isn't it."

Usagi noticed something unnatural.

It was too quiet. No, to be exact only the school building Usagi was in was shrouded in silence.

Both the day before, and today, students should have been moving all around the place preparing things and causing a lot of noise.

"——Usagi."

When she heard a familiar-sounding voice, Usagi's heart froze.

She quickly hid the photo in her breast pocket, and despite not wanting to turn around and look back, she couldn't help but to do it.

The fear that she was scarred with, resurfaced.

"You seem quite happy don't you. Did something good happen to you?"

Dyed by sunset, a smile that denied her hopes appeared in front of her.

It stirred a memory from the past. Back then, it was also sunset.

Her breathing clogged, she started to feel unpleasant and her body trembled.

"You didn't come back home yesterday? I've been waiting all this time. Mother was furious."

Reima's eyes narrowed as his fingers played with Usagi's hair.

"What a bad girl... maybe you need to be punished?"

Usagi's body shook as if she was hit with a whip.

If she loses here, it will turn back to how it was back then.

As if I'd lose, Usagi bit her lips and tried to disperse the fear with pain.

"Do you want me to break your heart again? Just like back then."

"...I-I will.. no longer..."

"Nn?"

"No longer——do as I'm told by you!"

With her body trembling, and with a trembling voice.

For the first time in her life, Usagi stood against those who tried to chain her down.

"......is that so. I get it."

However, that disobedience of hers, plunged her into despair once again.

Reima squeezed the hair he was playing with and raised his arm with it.

"A...ghh...!"

"The rebellious age eh? Can't be helped. I didn't want to say such a thing either."

As Usagi's face distorted in pain, Reima glared at her.

"Hee, so you can make that kind of expression. Nice. I've never seen it before, that's quite fresh."

He ridiculed how she looked like as she desperately tried to resist him. No matter how much she tried to resist it, fear was dwelling in Usagi's eyes and Reima didn't miss that fact. There is no way he would miss it. For this man, his greatest joy was to look at Usagi's frightened expression.

"You said you won't do as I tell you to, but what do you intend to do? It can't be that you intend to run away from home like yesterday? You think you can escape from Saionji house and me?"

His pupils shined as he narrowed his eyes to look at Usagi's suffering.

"Did you maybe beg your comrades for help? Kusanagi, Ootori, Suginami and the witch called Nikaido. They're all working for the Chairman... that's no good, what is going to happen if these illegal activities are publicized?"

"?! Why... why do you know that!"

"That's because it's about you. I investigated it all. The Ethics Committee's political strength is already equivalent to that of Inquisition Board's. No matter how stupid you are, you surely can imagine what is going to happen."

Reima moved his mouth right next to her ear.

"You will never get away from me."

"...hii..."

"A murderer like you, leaving everything behind and escaping, there is no way you can be forgiven. Did you forget your own sins?"

Usagi's breathing accelerated.

Murderer. Her own sins, Usagi tried to deny them. She thought 'there is no way I would do such a thing'.

"It's too late to feign ignorance. Because of you, your family died. Your brother, your sister and also your grandparents. You killed them all."

"Wr...o..ng..."

"I'm not wrong. Despite being a murderer, you have comrades now and enjoy your school life. Seeing you like that, I wonder what would your dead family say?"

"...uuu...!"

"Anyway, even those comrades of yours will eventually die because of you, won't they? What kind of sniper are you to make mistakes and shoot your own comrades? You haven't changed from back then at all, you kill everyone that surrounds you under the guise of an 'accident'."

"...uu...uuu......!"

"Even you yourself don't want such a thing to happen right? I get it. That's why you should quit school and become my possession."

Usagi vision shook, her breathing was irregular and her shoulders rose and lowered repeatedly. It felt like the hope she has finally managed to grip in her hands was spilling through her fingers, the world seemed like it had lost all its colors.

"It's all right. If it's me, I'll accept you as you are. I'm different from the other guys. The only one who will love someone so disgraceful and hideous like you, is me."

"...nn...ii..."

"You won't get away. I'm doing all of this for your sake."

Her lungs could no longer process the oxygen, and her vision started to flicker.

She could no longer stand, and collapsed on the spot.

Reima embraced her body after she fell, and this time he spoke gently into her ear.

"It'll be all right, Usagi... be at ease. You, unlike the others aren't going to become my slave. I will make only you stay by my side unaffected by magic."

As she was about to lose her consciousness, and it felt like her heart was dying, Usagi heard Reima's words. I won't let you run away... that's what those words of his meant.

"I mean, you're my important toy aren't you? Right... Usagi."

With just these words, Usagi's heart easily shattered.

Because she had comrades, she did her best.

Destroying Usagi's last hope was easy for Reima. The wound in her heart, was very deep.

The poison seeped in during the years they were together, it was not something that could be detoxified so easily.

"Noow then... what should I do about your comrades."

There was something in his wide smile as he gently stroke Usagi's cheek.

Takeru returned to the classroom and after opening the door he approached Mari.

"Is Usagi here?"

"? If it's Usagi-chan, a while ago she left to buy ingredients for dinner."

Mari was preparing decorations in the classroom, she furrowed her eyebrows and looked at Takeru with a serious expression.

"What happened? You seem angry?"

"......no, nothing much."

In order to suppress his anger, Takeru took a deep breath.

"Did she go alone?"

"Yeah, she went out saying that if she'll stay any longer she'll get stained by Suginami."

"...and Ootori?"

"That insensitive woman was called over to the student council. I wonder what's more important to her, Usagi-chan or the student council."

As Mari puckered her lips, Takeru placed a hand on his chin and thought.

"Sorry, I'm going to look for Usagi. Was she headed to the cafeteria?"

"...I don't get what's going on, but I'll come with you. Explain the situation properly to me as we move."

Not knowing what happened, Mari hit Takeru's chest with her fist,and offered to go with him.

"If you're making such an expression, it means something nasty is going on. It shows on your face too much."

"But aren't you still working..."

"Although we're participating in the Witch-Hunting festival for Usagi-chan, that not going to help when she's in a crisis because that would be putting the cart before the horse."

She exhaled loudly and put a hand on her hip.

"...that's a big help. It's reassuring to have you with me."

"Somehow, it felt as if I was told that it makes no difference whether I'm here or not though?"

"You're digging into it too much."

Takeru said so with a wry smile and left for the dining room together with Mari.

She entered the kotatsu in the second student council room, Sendou drank tea and reported to Nagaru, the student council president listened to Sendou's words with her usual relaxed expression.

"...is that so～, you were unable to catch him alone yet～."

"Yes. However, he will probably start moving alone during the night, as he seems accustomed to it. The movement of other students should also be dulled, it's a perfect time to aim for him."

"I leave the arrest timing to you. About Ouka-chan too, even though she's a prodigy, tell her to be careful～"

"Understood."

Sendou's attitude was indifferent, Nagaru looked down with a slightly apologetic feel.

"Since I would just get in the way as you carry it out, and I'm unable to do anything... sorry for always asking you to do such dangerous things, Shizuka-chan."

Towards the concerned Nagaru, Sendou briefly smiled.

"...it's all for President's sake. I don't mind throwing away my life for you."

As Sendou placed a hand on her chest and spoke her true feelings, her face was lightly stained red. Nagaru stared at her fondly and then lowered her eyes with regret.

"...I see. You will throw your life away for my sake."

"Yes. You believed in me and invited me in. It's because of that I'm here."

"Shizuka-chan, I'm sorry... I couldn't help you."

Because of the sudden apology, Sendou tilted her neck, puzzled. But Nagaru ignored it and continued.

"With this I have lost all my subordinates〜... it feels so lonely."

"...President...?"

"Unfortunately, I'm unable to feel sad but... I know the feeling of having fun. I really enjoyed myself when I worked together with Shizuka-chan and the other members of the student council."

"............"

"It's a real shame I won't be able to taste this kind of fun any more. Especially with Shizuka-chan, with whom I knew the longest."

As she stared at the cup filled with liquid in daze, she muttered.

"That girl was never honest. Although I've noticed her feelings a long time ago, she did her best to hide how she truly felt... whenever I said "sorry for troubling you", she always responded like this."

She raised her face, and stared at her with a lonely expression.

At the same time, she pulled out a small handgun from the kotatsu, and pointed the derringer at Sendou.

"'I intend on become a banshee after all...', ...is what she said."

"............"

"I'm only being protected... a shameless student council president... I am really sorry."

".................."

".................."

The moment Nagaru put strength into the finger on the trigger, Sendou clicked her tongue and pulled out a handgun from her waist.

Two gunshots sounded in the second student council's room, and soon after that happened.

The sun had already set completely, Ouka arrived at the meeting place she agreed on with Sendou.

"Sorry to make you wait, Senpai."

As Ouka raised her voice, Sendou who was checking her gun looked up and made a thin smile.

"Sorry to contact you this late. The target didn't seem like he would be left alone."

"No... rather than that."

Ouka told Sendou about the large-scale magical circle drawn on the school and the magic name of the spell as well as scale of the damage it will invoke.

"...let's hurry. If we miss this opportunity, we don't know when the next chance to catch Tenmyouji alone will be."

"Understood. I will go ahead, Senpai will go after me."

"Ara, isn't it time to let the senior go first?"

"I have a Relic Eater. Worst comes to worse, it's power can be used to protect the owner's soul. If I was to be touched by enemy by any chance, use that opportunity to shoot."

"..........."

"...Senpai?"

"I understand. Then, I will follow after you rush in. Be careful."

While responding with a smile, Sendou started to move up the stairs while holding a gun. Ouka followed her.

At the very end of the hallway, at one of the empty classrooms. Sendou stuck to the wall on the right side of the door.

Ouka was sticking to the left side, and prepared to rush in.

Although it seemed like a simple empty classroom, it was clad in a strange atmosphere, it was heavy and suffocating. So gloomy it seemed as if a scream would sound from inside, it made Ouka feel sick.

It's here. Her intuition was confident of this place's abnormality, he was definitely there.

Ouka rushed in at the same time as Sendou opened the door.

She raised her gun and turned around the room while lowering her waist.

Front first, then she checked the left and right sides.

When she turned the muzzle to the left——she saw the person who was her target, he was standing in front of the blackboard.

"...Tenmyouji Reima. You're arrested for unauthorized use of anti-magical tools and the embezzlement of Magical heritages."

"…………"

"Bastard, you're suspected to be a witch. Surrender quietly. There's no way you will escape this academy."

Ignoring Ouka's advice, Reima didn't answer and grinned instead.

Reima also had a gun in his hand. Ouka thought he was intending to fight, but the muzzle wasn't pointing at her, but towards his feet.

Seeing that mysterious behavior, she looked at what his muzzle pointed to.

From between the desks two white legs were seen... and familiar-looking blonde hair.

"——Saionji?!"

Under Reima's feet lied Usagi.

It didn't seem like she was dead, but she had trouble breathing and was unconscious.

"What did you do!"

"As expected. It's good that you're predictable, Ootori Ouka."

"You bastard...!"

"That's dangerous, you shouldn't point such things at other people. I still haven't done anything. Well, but it seems like I'm going to from now on?"

He provoked her and shrugged.

She regretted not having live ammunition with her now. Even at this distance, she was confident that she could put a bullet in his brain before he squeezes the trigger.

But with anesthesia bullets, there would be a slight delay before he loses consciousness.

"I know your identity! Mephisto... I told you that I won't let you escape! Even if you kill Saionji, I'm going to arrest you! Before you sin any further, surrender yourself!"

Ouka no longer doubted that Reima was a witch.

Soon after, she realized she made a mistake.

"...I'm Mephisto? Who told you such a thing?"

"Don't think you can talk your way out of it, there's multiple evidences against you. You took over Tenmyouji Reima's body and devoured his soul, I already know about everything...!"

"Hahahaha, you're so stupid I'm at loss for words. My soul is my own. I was human all along. Why don't you use the filter and and check it? If you do that, you'll immediately understand that I'm not a witch."

She put strength into her body. If he says so with so much confidence, she had to consider another possibility.

If Reima wasn't Mephisto, then where was he?

No, maybe he didn't exist in the first place?

Mephisto was a fake, and this guy was simply a human who——

" I'm right here? "

*_zssht_*, a chill ran down her spine.

Warned by her inborn senses about a crisis, Ouka immediately lowered her body and turned her muzzle around.

At the same time, a bullet passed by where her head was just a moment earlier.

A surprise attack. It's not like she didn't expect one.

Ouka returned rapid fire towards her back.

It hit. Four anesthesia bullets struck the ambusher's chest.

But the person in question plunged on to Ouka without any care for them.

——*A bulletproof vest!*

She regretted not aiming for the head. Also, she couldn't leap in such confined space and in consequence, she fell on her back and slammed into the ground.

"Daaamnnn!"

She raised her neck and attempted to aim her gun at the ambusher... however.

Ouka froze. She visually confirmed the enemy's identity.

"...that's...why...!"

The ambusher raised her face while binding Ouka's arms behind her back.

The ambusher's identity was the person who hunted Mephisto together with her, it was Sendou Shizuka.

"Nice to meet you... Ootori Ouka-chan. I'm Mephisto."

An eerie voice intermingled with that of Sendou's and Mephisto laughed.

She climbed over Ouka's body pinning all of her limbs, and made an inhuman smile.

"...since when...!"

"Your comrade... Kusanagi... was it. When that child got close to Reima, she tried to help Kusanagi-kun. That's when I've eaten her up with pleasure."

"......!"

"The fact that you mistook Reima for Mephisto is what caused your defeat.... you sure are an outstanding child, but because of Kusanagi you lost your chance. This girl had a possibility of a surprise attack in mind, but despite the risk she tried to protect Kusanagi-kun... since that's what she promised you."

What a sad story isn't it, Mephisto added sorrowfully.

Ouka couldn't talk back to Mephisto who seemed to know it all nor hide her surprise.

"Mephisto inherits the memories and emotions of the possessed person, that's what this girl told you, isn't it? What were you two doing... and the fact that she desperately tried her best to keep her promise, I know all about it."

Mephisto rolled up her sleeves with her teeth and stuck out a long tongue.

Sendou's arm that appeared from the sleeves had countless scars on it.

The tongue seemed to be chewed and bit as well, blood was oozing out.

"Look at this. Ouch, it hurts. This girl's loyalty to the student council president was amazing. While writhing in pain as she was being killed and her soul devoured, she tried to commit suicide by biting off her tongue just to protect you guys and the student council president."

"Bit...ch..."

"But in the end, she wailed just like everyone else. President〜 President〜 and such. Heh, love comes in various forms. Love that's deemed to be unrequited... such a sad story, is it not."

With Sendou's face, Mephisto laughed at Sendou herself.

"Well, the President in question should be lying down in a pool of blood and dumping her own internal organs! I killed her! I killed this girl's beloved President with her own two hands! Ahihi!"

"——I'll slaughter you! I'll never forgive you!"

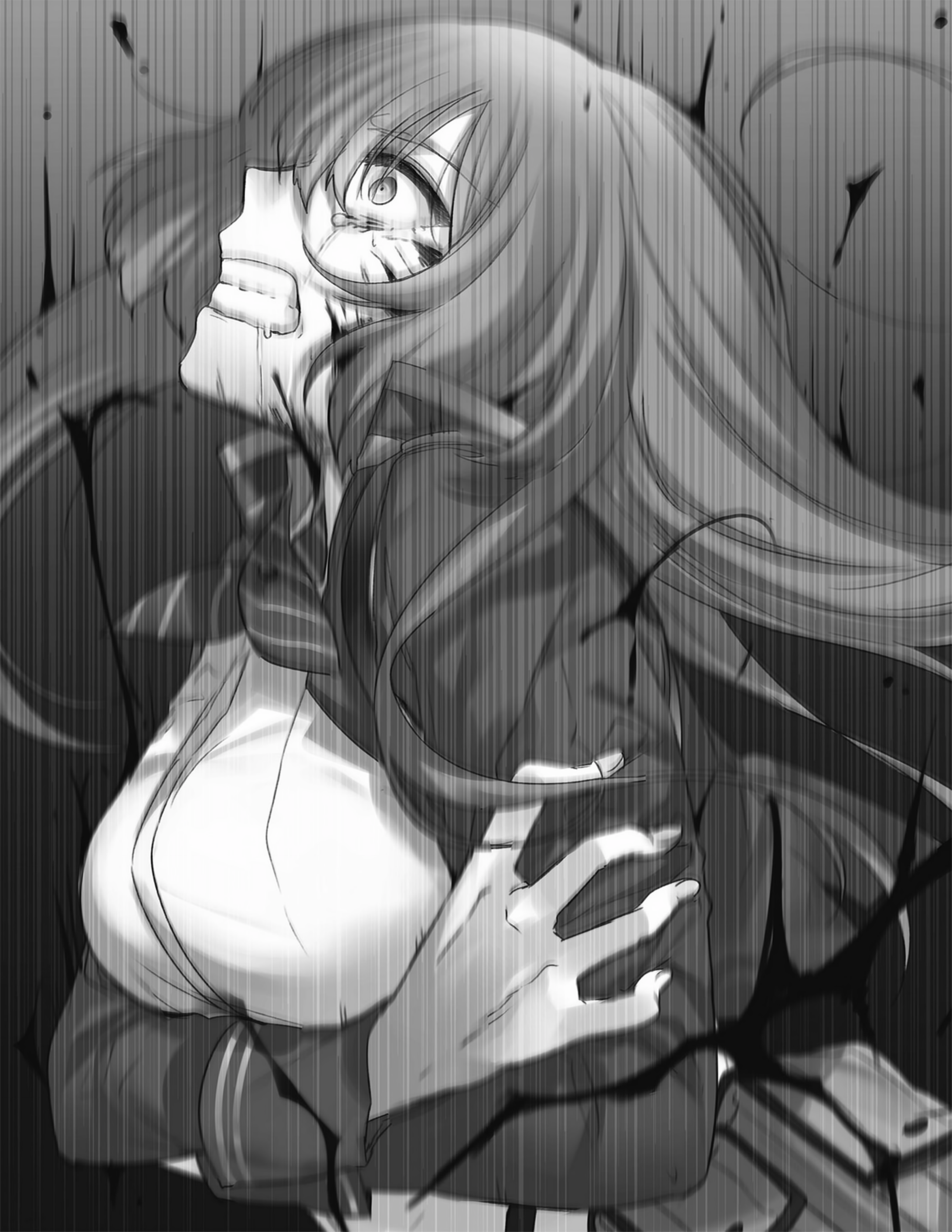
Her anger burst, Ouka tried to free her arms from the constraint and move the muzzle towards Mephisto.

However, that's when Mephisto pulled out a piece of paper that looked like a bill and placed it on her strangely long tongue.

A specialized piece of paper that had a operative procedure and a magical circle engraved as well as imbued with magic, an "Instant Charm". Although as the name implied, it was a disposable thing and a substitute, it could also be used by normal humans who don't have any magic in their bodies.

She was careless. Ouka was already been touched by Mephisto.

What was input in the charm was without a doubt 《Install》.



"Now, open your heart as if you were spreading your legs——if you don't, it's going to hurt reaaal much."

"Fu-guu!——Iii——aaaAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!"

Ouka's screams erupted.

The cause of her screams was pain. That pain, was not one of flesh nor the brain's, her soul was in pain.

She saw a flashback. A memory of her past. A memory of her family.

Her sin.

『"——Help me... Onee-chan."』

*Stop——stop it!——hee——so you killed your little sister——don't look at it!——how gruesome.*

Their thoughts mixed, she was being eroded by Mephisto.

『"——I'm scared, Onee-chan."』

*Don't draw out my memories!——Uwaa, being cut up like that must've hurt——don't defile my past!——ehh, but you really wanted to kill her right?*

『"——Wh-y... Onee-cha-n..."』

*——You're wrong! It's not true!——You weren't your parents' biological daughter and was jealous of your little sister——STOPSTOPSTOPSTOP——gyaha——gyahahaha——top——gyahahahahahaha!*

As Ouka desperately fought against it, thoughts of Mephisto laughing at the recollection of her past filled her head.

At this rate I'll be done for. Think——of what to do!

In severe pain, she made her last stand. She gave up on her own soul and fulfilled her responsibility as a member of Inquisition. As her senses faded away, she moved her body and rammed a hand into her uniform's pocket.

She dug out an object, and pressed a button.

Immediately after, the last of her resistance and her awareness faded away, she sunk into darkness completely.

Takeru and Mari had scoured the Academy in search of Usagi, now they were holding their knees and catching their breath.

"Where did you go... Usagi-chan."

There was sweat on Mari's cheeks. Usagi wasn't in cafeteria, and they didn't meet her on the way there.

Her device didn't respond, and she didn't seem to have her cellphone with her.

Something must've happened to Usagi.

"Let's split up...! Mari, you go towards the faculty building! I'll look around the gym!"

Takeru issued instructions and was about to run in a different direction.

However, Mari stopped walking as if stunned.

"...what is it, Mari?"

Mari stood in place and touched her neck.

To be precise, she touched the collar attached to her neck that restrained her magical power, the Gleipnir.

"......the restraint was released."

"Eh?"

"It's up to level 2 but... right now, I can use magic. This is...!"

Her face stiffened, and she looked at Takeru.

Without a doubt. Ouka released the restraint on Mari's collar.

"...something must've happened...?"

As Mari thought with unease. Takeru also felt it was suspicious.

There was no way Ouka would play around with Mari's restraint, absolutely no way.

Only one conclusion came to their minds. Although they didn't know the details, it was some sort of emergency.

"Wait, let's try to get in touch with Ootori first. We'll talk it over after th——"

At about the same time as he took out his mobile, a ringtone sounded.

He unfolded the phone and stared at the screen in wonder.

It was a call from an unknown number. Cautiously, Takeru pushed the call button.

《"Is it... Kusanagi Takeru...-kun?"》

"...who are you?"

《"I'm the student council president, name's Hoshijiro... ouchch... you know about me right?"》

The student council president? Considering the fact that Ouka was associating with her, Takeru felt uneasy.

《"Being hit by live ammunition hurts a lot despite me wearing a bulletproof vest～... uwaa even though it's all fake, there's a lot of blood—... afuunn～"》

"...what are you doing?"

《"Nn～, pretending to be dead? Well, enough about me. The problem is with Ouka-chan."》

"?! Did anything happen to Ootori?!"

《"Calm down... is what I'd like to say, but I can't really do that. But for the time being, it would be a lot of help if you calmly listened to me."》

Takeru's bad premonition swelled.

《"——Tenmyouji Reima and a witch accompanying him have captured Saionji Usagi-chan and Ootori Ouka-chan. That's why please, lend me a hand."》

His premonition that something not good was about to happen, was unfortunately spot on.

That place was completely silent. However, the room was in a horrible plight, the desks were scattered wildly and some of them were completely destroyed and turned into debris.

It was as if a fierce animal had rampaged in there.

There were four people in the dim room.

One of them was Tenmyouji Reima beside whom lied Usagi unchanged. There was also the second year, Sendou Shizuka who lied on the ground like a doll.

Finally, Ootori Ouka was lying on her knees on the ground while trembling.

"That was a hard opposition. For me to take this long, it's probably the first time?"

While kicking a turned-over chair, Reima approached Ouka.

Ouka moved her curled up body and stood up.

And she stroked her long sunset-colored hair——stuck out her long tongue and snorted.

"——This is no good. Seems like Relic Eater contractors really are troublesome."

She loudly scratched her head while clicking her tongue. It was a gesture Ouka would absolutely never make. Clearly, it was someone else, a different being.

Mephisto's soul has already intruded on her body.

"...do you get it now that you possessed her?"

"Of course I do. But I was nearly done in over here. That's because I can't use any magic without a Magical Heritage. Breaking through the Relic Eater's barrier and devouring her is impossible huh."

"You've taken her over didn't you. Seems like it's no problem to me."

"No good, it's nooo good. If it's like this it'll be something like a split personality. I have seized the initiative, but this girl's soul is still alive. Inquisition must've noticed it as well... if the Relic Eater reports to them, the people above will start believing in my existence."

Mephisto raised both of her hands above, said so and sighed.

Reima started to act impatient, sweat appeared on his face.

"Don't fuck around! What are we going to do?! We still haven't triggered the "Master-Slave"! There's no way the folks who were made into slaves with the charms will fight for us right?! You want just the two of us alone to fight against Inquisition?!"

"Can't be helped eh. We need to speed up the activation of the magic."

"It's different from what you promised! On top of me being suspected, you used me as bait without my knowledge?! I was the one who used attraction on the students during this month as well as brought and stored Magical Heritages! You said that after occupying the school... you will give Inquisition to me, that's why I helped you!"

As he drew closer to Mephisto in anger, a hand extended and grabbed Reima's neck. Mephisto's hand bit into his neck, stopping him from breathing before slamming him into the floor.

"Gaha... what are you..."

"Don't get ahead of yourself——trash."

Mephisto lowered her face to be in front of Reima's eyes as he fell down.

Her chaotic pupils displayed an ambition that was far beyond that of Reima's.

"I can kill you any time. When I was eating human souls, I didn't kill you just by chance, you were not disposable and could be used for this assault, and because you were easy to handle and a son of a noble family associated with Ethics Committee you know?"

"——Let... go."

"I found a value and an use for you, a beansprout who was the student council president in the fourth branch school. The one who made you into a naked king was me as well. Do you understand who is the master hereee?"

"Forgive——me...! Hur... 'm dyin... I'm dying...! I beg you, stop... stop——it."

When Reima began to cry miserably, Mephisto finally removed his hand.

"Hmph, you really are a pathetic man. Aloof and the only thing about you is your looks, this is the real you."

"Geho... gehh... uee..."

Reima put a hand on the floor and vomited because of the pain. While placing a foot on his back, Mephisto glanced at him with pity.

"Don't worry. The students are still in the school. Although I originally planned to seize the entire city, we can take this school and about a third of the city as we are now. I'm not interested in becoming a king, I'll give all of it to you after we're finished."

"Hii... fuu.. hii..."

"That's why, shut up and listen to me."

While still trampling over cowering Reima, Mephisto looked up at the ceiling.

"Wait for me, my body... I'll be back soon, I'm coming back."

Her eyes looked as if she yearned for the one she loved, and was heading to pick them up, they shone brilliantly.

The witch called Mephisto feasted on the souls of others ever since antiquity, and took over their bodies.

However, there was something important to her as well.

That was her own body. The unconfirmed ancient attribute "Devil" which allowed her to use 《Install》 charms, and froze her own body to prevent it from ageing.

However, now she was robbed of her own body encased in ice by Inquisition and only had a number of 《Install》 charms she previously hoarded.

Mephisto's soul had no contact with her body for more than ten years now.

"Noow, it's time for my revenge! I'm going to make Inquisition regret soiling my cute, cute body!"

She wanted to reclaim her own flesh.

That was the only reason of hers that made her defy and fight against Inquisition.

Takeru was in a school building as he was contacted by Hoshijiro, he faced down and listened after putting the mobile phone's speaker right next to his ear. He clenched his teeth strongly enough to make blood appear in his mouth.

《"Fu-guu!——Iii——aaaAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!"》

Ouka's scream sounded right into his ear.

After that, there was the sound of rampage, laughter; gunshot and laughter again.

The sound stopped soon after.

《"This sound was recorded by Ouka chan ten minutes ago. She's probably already taken over by Mephisto's soul."》

"…………"

《"The details are as I've told you before. The hostile forces are Mephisto and Tenmyouji Reima. Sorry for being sudden, but please lend me your help to save the students of this school."》

"…………"

《"Kusanagi-kun?"》

"Shut up for a moment."

As Takeru raised his face, his eyes that were red from anger could be seen.

"I'm not listening to your orders. I am simply going to save my comrades."

《"...however, Ouka-chan's already..."》

"You aren't the one to decide about the safety of my comrades!"

His roar echoed, the air trembled and quivered.

"...I'm going to save the two of them. That's all I have to do."

《"...I get it, that's fine."》

"Wait, there's one more thing I have to say to you."

《"......?"》

"When everything is finished——I'm going to beat you up with my own two hands."

After hearing that violent declaration, Nagaru fell silent. Mari who was standing right next to Takeru was terrified by his dreadful appearance.

Soon after, they've heard a muffled laughter come from the mobile phone.

《"I don't mind, hit me as much as you like."》

Takeru squinted unfazed.

《"Just, don't forget to save this school and the students in it. If you properly finish it, I'm fine with being hit. About me asking Ouka-chan for help, there's no excuse and I think that it was bad of me to do so. But I don't think there's anything I have to apologize to you for."》

"...I don't want your apology for making Ootori work for you, why didn't you speak to us about it? If you did then this wouldn't——"

《"Sorry, but the only one who could be trusted was Ouka-chan, I couldn't include you guys. You are Twilight Type's contractor, Saionji Usagi has a connection with Tenmyouji and Suginami Ikaruga is the Alchemist's "Designs Child" right, I know all of it."》

Nagaru fluently listed out information that should've only been known to the upper echelons and Dullahan.

《"No matter how you look at it, you're all the Chairman's pawns right? Especially you, Kusanagi-kun you're acting like a puppet who moves as he wants you to. How can I believe such a guy?"》

"———!"

《"Ouka-chan's different. Whether it was the inner works of Inquisition, things about Chairman or Alchemist, as well as investigating Mistilteinn, she investigated everything behind the scenes for you. She's someone who doesn't believe in suspicious things and has a decent amount of conviction. She's different from you who's only obeying."》

He couldn't respond or deny it. What Nagaru said was true. While Takeru had his doubts about Sougetsu, he didn't try to investigate about what he's plotting.

All he did was working hard to help his comrades, he didn't do anything besides that.

Ouka was thinking about her comrades, Nagaru anticipated that he will say that.

The thing about Mistilteinn was for his own sake. He had asked her about the compensation he has to pay for contracting a Relic Eater.

At that time, Ouka was also worried about Takeru.

Ouka was the only one who didn't just look at "now" but was looking forward to the "future".

Originally that should be something a Captain does, even though it the Captain's role...

He was almost crushed by his own shallowness.

《"I'll say it again. Protect the school and the students."》

"............I get it."

Rather than with her usual indecisive voice, Nagaru said with a heavy and clear voice.

《"...don't die. I said that I won't apologize, but all of this happened because of me. As the representative of students that were dragged into it, I will grant you a right to beat me up."》

"............"

《"Come back alive, so that you can hit me."》

"............"

《"That's all."》

After the call finished, Takeru bit his lips to admonish himself.

Mari who was listening beside him, and watched him anxiously.

"...w-what, she's saying whatever she wants despite being a shut in who's staying in a cellar."

He ignored Mari who was spewing curses, Takeru looked up and called Lapis.

"...Lapis, can you hear me?"

《"Yes. I am always beside you."》

"Did a permission for Relic Eater usage come?"

《"After the emergency warning from Vlad, the restriction was removed. It's available any time."》

He connected with Mari by magic resonance and continued.

"Do you know the whereabouts of Ootori and Usagi?"

《"I couldn't discern Ootori Ouka's coordinates, but I found Saionji Usagi's whereabouts. Urban warfare training grounds. She seems to be trapped inside a building with Tenmyouji Reima."》

As she said she didn't know Ouka's coordinates, Takeru bit his lips again.

《"...if it's about Ootori-sama, there's still time. Since Vlad is protecting her soul, it should be safe for now. But since she hasn't finalized the contract, it won't be long."》

"?! Is that true?!"

《"Yes. The enemy is using 《Install》 charms, so they have to carry one on them for an emergency escape at all times. If we force them to use it, it's possible she, Ouka-sama will survive. Let's prioritize Saionji Usagi's rescue and halting the large-scale magic."》

Advised by Lapis, Takeru established the course of action.

However, before Takeru even managed to ask her, Lapis already informed them about Ouka's safety. She must either be reading his thoughts, or maybe somewhere in her heart she also started to think about her comrades?

Although he was quite interested in that, it wasn't the time to think about that.

"What about the Magical Heritages the witch prepared?"

《"There is no magic power reaction in the entire school. However, I can identify the location, according to specifications the Magical Heritage has to be placed at the center of the magical circle. I assume it's installed on the roof of the 14th school building that's located in the school campus' center."》

"...is there a way to cancel it?"

《"I do not recommend destroying them. Unlike the instant charms that cannot generate magical power on their own, magical power inside Magical Heritage(s) can accidentally discharge and cause a physical disaster. Even if we absorb the magic power after activation, the scale would be too big."》

"Then, there's no way to remove it?"

《"No. If the operative procedure is destroyed, it can cause a misfire. Although if it's Nikaido Mari-sama, then."》

As Lapis said that, Takeru looked at Mari.

Mari shook her head and spat out a sigh.

"I just have to make it so the Magical Heritage's magic doesn't activate when it's smashed right?"

"...seems like it. Can you do it?"

She responded to the question with a "hmph",

and brushed off an end of the muffler that was lying on her shoulder and turned around.

"That——don't you know I'm called the "Witch of Aurora"?"

She slightly raised her hat with her fingers and smiled fearlessly.

It was a smile full of confidence, and it looked more encouraging than anything else in the world.

* * *

Saionji Usagi saw a dream.

A dream of her childhood, of the time when her heart died.

The reasons why the Saionji house has gotten its current position and prestige dates back 150 years in the past, to the first Witch-Hunt War.

During the war an ancestor of Saionji was stationed in Finland and was a remarkable sniper who had slain many witches on the battlefields. The countries still had their armies back then and Inquisition wasn't as powerful as it is currently, but Saionji's achievements were known by everyone whether it were organizations or countries, friends or foes.

No one knew about what kind of person the ancestor of Saionji was or what personality he or she had, the only one thing known are the achievements. He has been given a nickname by his comrades "Belaya Smert", he was said to have killed a thousand witches using a modified Mosin–Nagant.

After the war, he had been forced by a Akashic Hazard to leave the land he's been living on and after traveling with refugees he had settled in old Japan. He had become an Inquisitor and attained many achievements, after that he had been given a position according to his achievements.

He himself didn't meddle in politics too much, his son took over the position and acted as one of the upper-echelons.

After that, not as a sniper but through politics the Saionji house supported Inquisition and helped it grow in power.

『"Really you, no matter what you do it's no good."』

From a very early age, that's what Usagi has been told continuously.

She had older siblings, her Sister's body was weak, but her Brother was outstanding. On the other hand, Usagi repeatedly failed no matter what she did, greatly disappointing her parents.

The reason the family said so, was because she was a child born of her Father's mistress.

Nevertheless, Usagi did her best. She attempted to improve the current situation even if by a little, and she continued to work hard from an early age. She put in more effort than the others, she was more persistent than the others, and struggled more than the others.

However, no matter what she did, her results were never above average.

『"If you want us to forgive you for being born, repay us by obtaining achievements."』

Every time they looked at her with disappointment, Usagi withheld her tears and held the hem of her skirt.

I'm sorry. And what always followed it was.

I'm sorry. Give me another chance.

I'm sorry. I'll do my best, really, I will do my best.

She continued to scold herself, put up with it and put a lot of effort in.

Usagi was so desperate, because she wanted her parents to praise her.

She wanted them to pat her head, say she did well and gently hug her.

That was all, she sought such a modest reward, never giving up.

When they learned Usagi had a talent as a sniper, she was taken to her grandparents' home. She was considered to be in the way of her older siblings education and they got rid of her by entrusting her to her grandparents.

Her Grandmother acted kindly towards Usagi. Despite knowing her upbringing, she didn't use her as a tool. Usagi felt very happy during those times, but lived only a short while in there.

The one who taught her how to use the gun was her Grandfather.

Her Grandfather seemed to work in Inquisition as a marksman when he was young.

However, when he stood above and differed opinions with Inquisition and claimed that witches had their human rights, the Saionji house's position was compromised.

With both his and his comrades' feedback, an organization called Ethics Committee was launched in separation from Inquisition. After dealing a blow to Inquisition's pride, Usagi's Grandfather retired.

After he retired, because of him the position of Saionji house in Inquisition was compromised and he voluntarily moved to live in the mountains with his wife to live a quiet life.

Her Grandfather, was a strict man.

『"If you want to be an Inquisitor and handle guns well, don't act spoiled just because you're a child. Throw away appearances."』

『"You might be a child of a mistress, but wear the name of Saionji with pride and act nobly."』

『"Failing once is all right. But never make the same mistake twice."』

In fact, whenever she made the same mistake twice he mercilessly slapped her cheek.

After a few months of learning how to snipe, the first time she shot a living being came, Usagi couldn't forget it even now. Snow was pouring down, in the soundless world she was right next to her Grandfather, aiming the muzzle towards a deer. When she aimed for the deer in the silence, the finger that was placed on the trigger trembled. It was the weight of taking away a life that made her panic.

Nevertheless, when her Grandfather had gave her a signal, Usagi pulled the trigger.

The bullet hit the deer's waist, but it wasn't dead. It dragged its body through the snow.

Her Grandfather was furious. Although he tolerated her first failures up until then, this time he raised his voice in anger.

『"I told you to put it down with a single shot! That's your responsibility! It's suffering! You're tormenting it! What should you be doing now?!"』

Just as she's been told to, Usagi closed onto the deer and put the muzzle right to its head.

Her fingers trembled again. The deer exhaled painfully, and its pupils relayed 'it hurts' and it wailed.

Usagi reflected after seeing the deer's suffering and squeezed the trigger.

After the gunshot, silence returned and she was in daze. Her body trembled, Usagi realized she had extinguish a life.

What have I done. Regret enveloped her heart.

That's when her Grandfather approached her from behind and hugged her.

His large and rugged hands gently stroked her head.

『"Well done! You're a strong girl. Stronger than anyone."』

Usagi was stunned, but she surrendered to her Grandfather's warmth.

She was praised for the first time in her life. And for the first time in her life, someone acted gently towards her.

When she realized that fact, big tears started to flow from her eyes.

That day, Usagi cried loudly for the first time.

For her, the home of her grandparents was the only place she could stay in.

And the place she finally found was lost just a month later.

Her Brother had come to play in her Grandparents house. He knew that Usagi was learning how to handle a gun and said he also wants to learn how to use one. However, their Grandfather stubbornly denied the request saying it's still too early.

In the evening of that day, Usagi was shoveling the snow outside when she heard a sound of someone entering the warehouse.

When she went to check what's happening inside, she found her brother in there.

He took out the gun and bullets from warehouse without permission.

Usagi tried to stop her brother, but he didn't listen. Someone without any knowledge about it shouldn't touch guns. In order to uphold her Grandfather's teachings Usagi desperately tried to take the gun away from her brother.

The gun went off by an accident, the bullet entered through her brother's chin and penetrated his brain.

He died in an instant.

『"——You killed him!"』

Her mother blamed her. The entire family with the exception of her Grandparents blamed her.

And she didn't even question it. She was just being blamed as usual.

——I'm sorry.

Usagi continued to apologize

——Please forgive me.

No matter what her Grandfather said, Usagi continued to blame herself.

Ever since then, no matter what Usagi did, she became abnormally nervous. Whenever she attempted to do something, she worried about whether she will hurt someone or not. In fact, in the beginning when she thought so, it led to her results improving.

Soon after, her only allies, her Grandparents passed away together.

『"It's because you made them worry about you. You killed them."』

She was being suspected, and the death of her Grandparents was blamed on her.

And Usagi also blamed herself.

Before long, her sickly sister also left the world.

『"You killed her. Because you killed our son, our daughter's condition has worsened."』

Without any reason, their Mother blamed Usagi.

Usagi felt like her heart was dying, and gradually sank into solitude.

She met Reima at her sister's funeral.

Reima approached Usagi who was curl up in the corner of the garden, away from her family.

『"Heya. I'm Tenmyouji Reima. You're Usagi... right? Nice to meet you."』

He called out to her with a gentle voice.

The frightened Usagi apologized reflexively to the person who she met for the first time.

And then Reima gently stroke her head as she looked below.

『"What is it? Did something scary happen?"』

『"...I-I'm sor... sorr...y...』

『"Why are you apologizing? You haven't done anything to me right?"』

Usagi looked up in surprise. In front of her, she saw a young and gentle smile.

『"Since you haven't done anything to me, I'm not going to blame you. Don't worry... I'm your ally."』

『"............"』

『"I know. I know that you always did your best, and put up with many things. I know all of it."』

That's when Usagi started to cry for the first time after her Grandfather died.

She was reminded of his kindness and wept.

This boy, he's different from the other family members. He's the same as her grandparents, someone who properly looked at her efforts. That's what she thought.

『"By the way——you killed your brother and sister didn't you?"』

With these words, Usagi was plunged into despair once again.

『"............eh?"』

『"Is that true?! Amazing! How did it feel? Does killing people feel good?"』

She finally saw Reima's eyes that peeked from the gap between the eyelids, inside his pupils dwelled darkness no different from those of her family members.

Usagi started to cower.

『"...Aa...aa..."』

『"What were you thinking when you killed them? You were jealous of your brother right? Was it exhilarating? Hey, answer me murderer. There's no one else here, so tell me～ I want to know. Come on, speak."』

Reima lightly tapped her cheek and ordered her to talk. Usagi cowered and shrank even further to protect herself and cried.

『"...hii...ii...!"』

『"Why are you cowering like that. I'm not going to scold you so you don't need to be so frightened, I'm just curious. Since I've gone through the trouble of speaking to you, at least entertain me with an interesting story."』

『"Au...auu..."』

Usagi was kicked by Reima, she used one arm to protect her head.

『"Ahaha, how silly. You're crying despite being a murderer. You're interesting. I like you."』

『"...hiii...iii..."』

『"I decided. From today onward, you're mine. If that's the case, you won't be alone and will be happy right? I'm going to keep you as my pet."』

『"I'm s...hii...rry..."』

『"I'm kind aren't I? Be grateful, you can call me Reima-sama from today onward."』

That was a distorted love. Reima continued to hurt Usagi in order to make her easier to take advantage of, make her break and force her into submission.

Usagi couldn't forget his smile on that day's sunset.

From that day onward, she started to hyperventilate.

She was lonely.

After she enrolled in school, until she entered high school... she's been lonely the entire time.

* * *

She opened her eyes wet from tears. Her field of vision was blurred, it was as if it was still an illusion or a dream.

Just how many times did she see that dream.

Ever since she entered the test platoon, the frequency at which she was reminded of the old days had reduced.

She must've been satisfied. Just by being there, Usagi's heart was at ease.

*......that's right... I need to hurry... and go back to classroom... and cook for them...eh.*

After remembering what she was supposed to do, she looked around and focused on her vision.

Someone was in front of her. The person was breathing roughly and as if covering her——

"?!"

Usagi's consciousness returned and she opened eyes all at once.

Reima was covering her body.

"——Reima...sama?!"

"Good morning Usagi. You almost overslept."

"What are you doing! Let me go!"

"What you mean, it's our first night."

He smiled as he said that, and put a hand on her clothes again. When Usagi tried to resist him, she noticed that her clothes changed while she slept.

She was wearing pure white clothes... a wedding dress.

A chill ran down her spine.

"W-wh...y..."

"Your clothes were changed by one of my slaves so I didn't see it, but it's perfect. You're beautiful, Usagi."

While saying that, Reima let go of a flower bouquet and stroked her cheek.

She looked around while trembling and jerking and saw an extraordinary spectacle. The buildings were decorated with ceremonial wood. Countless candles were lined up and everything was decorated by congratulatory white flowers. An unusually large stained glass was lit up by the moonlight.

"It's a western wedding ceremony. I made it while preparing for the Witch-Hunting festival, see? I made it thinking about my wife, aren't I a good husband?"

He laughed embarrassed and stroked Usagi's lips.

"Now, let's have a wedding just the two of us. You must be happy?"

"!! N-noo——!!"

Her body shook, she tried to escape from Reima somehow. As she tried to escape from his hold by force, Usagi's fist hit Reima's cheek.

"Ou...ch..."

His lip cut, blood dripped from Reima's mouth.

Reima's expression changed suddenly and a chilly smile appeared on his face. He furrowed his eyebrows and his ugly nature surfaced.

Usagi was hit on the cheek.

"I thought of being gentle since it's your first time... and what... even though I did so much...! After that fucking witch, even a damn murderer is opposing me... every each one of you... looking down at me!"

He grasped Usagi's collar and pulled strongly, all at once.

With a loud noise, the cloth on her chest was torn. Both her chest and underwear were uncovered. Reima took Usagi's hair in her hand and raised her up. She didn't scream, only trembled.

"Hhahahahahahaha! This is fine! That's how Usagi should be! You scared me with that, but you are an existence that should obey me!"

"Hii....uu..."

"You're not acknowledged by anyone! You accomplish nothing! Everything backfires at you no matter how hard you try!"

"Ha... guu."

Her breathing accelerated, her chest moved violently.

Reima watched it with pleasure, he placed a hand on the cheek he hit and stroked it gently.

"Know this, Usagi. I understand how you feel. Just like you, I've been treated horribly in school and by the Tenmyouji household. They didn't understand my excellence and always looked at me with scorn, isolated me..."

"...ngh...ghh."

"I'm different from you! I'm outstanding! There's no way those incompetent people will understand... cause I, I reached somewhere they cannot ever be! You saw it right?! Just a month has passed, and everyone calls me Reima-sama already! I just had to use a little bit of magic!"

Selfishly, he acted conceited as he claimed that. This man was also bound by his family and compared with his brothers, branded as a bastard and looked down upon as he had no results in school.

While they were living under the same circumstances, they were two completely different people.

Usagi was despised, and even though she was trampled over and cried, she stood back up. No matter what happened, she put up with it while clenching her teeth.

On the contrary, Reima blamed others for everything. He boasted to everyone around him and denied it, he no longer put in any effort.

Although he wasn't pathetic, but because of that he distorted.

The two weren't compatible at all.

That was the reason Reima sought Usagi. He wanted someone more miserable than he was beside him.

"It's all right Usagi... even if you're a bastard child and a murderer, I won't leave you. I'll keep you in my house. You can depend on me, rely on me. I won't throw you away and will spoil you."

"...n..no."

"I'll become king of this city. I'm going to make everyone else slaves, only you will stay by my side. So hurry up and be mine."

With a crooked smile, Reima reached out to Usagi's leg.

Usagi stared up into empty space, light was gone from her eyes.

Tenmyouji Reima's existence itself was a trauma for her. Every time she met him, he reminded her she's a murderer. Again and again, it assaulted her ears, again and again she was subjected to verbal violence.

Usagi did her best the entire time. To make everyone acknowledge her and to atone for causing her brother's death... and yet.

『"You killed your brother and sister didn't you?"』

Telling him that she wasn't at fault would've been easy. He might have not believed her if she said so, but it would be easy to say so.

However, she was cornered by Reima to an extent that made it impossible.

*...I'm...tired of this...*

Her heart was at its limit.

Reima's hand touched her thigh. But she didn't feel anything. She felt something touched her, but Usagi's body was already like that of a doll.

When she looked to the side feeling defeated, it entered her vision. In the middle of torn and scattered clothes, there was that photo. The one she took together with everyone, the photo from the Witch-Hunting festival.

Her comrades looked like they were having fun as they reached out to her.

*...I want to go back to that place.*

As if pleading, her hand crawled through the floor and extended desperately.

*Don't leave... take me with you...*

Her fingertips trembled, they wouldn't grow longer. They couldn't reach the photo.

*Help me... please help me.*

Usagi's hand fell on the floor, powerless.

The world on the photo faded away, like smoke. As if moving away, it disappeared.

She gave up on everything, and was about to leave her body to Reima.

However, that's when.

『"Come on～ Usagi-chan! Hurry up and comee!"』

『"Saionji, don't dawdle."』

『"Usagi, make haste and come "』

『"Captain's orders, hurry up and come here."』

She heard voices, in her eyes a spark of life appeared.

『"——We need you."』

Usagi realized, where is the place she can be herself in.

These voices made her feel like crying out of happiness, no matter when she heard them.

*...not yet... I still haven't lost anything... and nothing has faded away yet.*

In her chest, something warm appeared. Her body's senses came back.

*I, I have decided to oppose those who try to shackle me... didn't I decide that just a while ago...*

Her heart that was nearly lost has come back.

The place she belongs to has engraved itself in her. She was certain of where to go back. Just being saved was no good. Looking from a distance was no good. Being frightened all the time was no good.

If she had a place she won't be chased away from... a place she could go back to, then she had to fight back with all her strength.

Even if your parents haven't acknowledged you, your efforts have been acknowledged. Unlike how it was during those days, there are people who respond to you. There are comrades who reach out to you. That's why, you need to stretch your hands towards them!

If you don't, they won't be able to reach you!

"Khu!!"

Usagi opened her eyes wide and hit away Reima's hand that reached towards her underwear.

*I have a place to return to!*

She reached out to Reima's hand that was about to touch her breasts.

*I have no time, I can't let a man like this stand in my way right now!*

Now, let's start the resistance. To resist everything that he has blamed on her. Come on, let's show him just how strong girl am I.

Who cares about family. Who cares about Reima. Shake off all of that and rampage as you please.

This is——Saionji Usagi's rebellious stage!

*Rabbits have fangs too!*

To Reima's surprise, Usagi held his hand and opened her mouth.

"WWAAAaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!!!!!!"

And with everything she had, she bit into Reima's arm.

"I-giiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii?!"

"Ghhhhhhhrrhh〜〜〜〜〜〜!!!"

As Usagi bit him out of the blue, Reima let out a pathetic scream.

"L-let go! You murderer!"

I won't let go. I absolutely won't let go. And she continued to bite and chew.

Reima tried to shake her off an resist, but Usagi desperately clung to him.

He apparently didn't know about her absurd strength.

In order to make him realize just how strong she was, Usagi continued to bite his clothes, skin and meat——literally bitting him to shreds.

He rolled on the floor of the church while screaming.

Usagi rose from the ground half-naked and immediately picked up the photo, she held it to her chest as it was something important to her.

She spat out a piece of meat and glared sharply at Reima.

"A miserable and inferior piece of trash covered in excrement like you...! Don't think you can do as you please with me, Saionji Usagi!"

She yelled at him, Reima cried because of the pain his arm was in and opened his mouth.

It was the first time in her life that Usagi used such vulgar language.

Beyond expectations, a smile appeared on her face. She should've done it earlier.

"Y-you're just mere U-Usagi!"

His voice seemed like it was wrung out and upside down, his proper face has distorted. His hair was ruffled and wrinkles appeared on his cheeks. The appearance of a man with delicate features was no more, his original nature revealed itself.

That appearance of his was so ugly, it made Usagi laugh mockingly.

"Don't look down on me... don't look down on me...! You'll regret this! It's time for punishment, Usagiiiiiiiiiii!!"

He shouted these words in anger and put a hand on his hip.

And there was a sword decorated with gold.

Reima pulled out the sword all at once.

At that moment, a magical circle appeared under his feet.

"It's one that allows me to assume Hero form! With this I'm going to cut all your limbs for all the sins you've committed...!"

"Why do you have such a thing...!"

"It's a Magical Heritage I've got from a witch for self-defense! I'm going to make you regret with this!"

His body shone brilliantly and was covered in golden armor.

Hero form. It was something Haunted has achieved before while using the magical sword Dáinsleif, high level magic unique to Magical Heritages.

Usagi had completely no idea why would Reima have such a thing.

"Fear me fear me fear me! Cry, apologize and serve me! And rely on me!"

Reima held the sword and thrust it towards Usagi.

Not knowing what to do, she tried to defend herself reflexively with her arms.

However, that was pointless when facing a Magical Heritage.

And the next moment.

——**bariiiiiiiiiiiiiinn...!**

Something else was slashed and a sound similar to that of broken glass rang out.

Usagi peaked out from between her crossed arms to see what happened.

It plunged in right from above Reima. A human figure clad in azure broke in through the large windows made of stained glass and entered the church.

"Wha——?!"

Reima stopped doing anything, he just looked above him.

"Kusanagi Double-Edged style——Mantis Slope!"

The figure rotated forward, spinning like a humanoid turbine and slashed at Reima.

Reima somehow managed to block the blow with his sword, but the next moment——

"——Ubuaa?!"

He couldn't negate the impact completely and the back of his own sword crushed his face, he was blown towards the church's exit.

The azure humanoid rotated and landed in the church on his legs.

As the broken stained glass rained down, it rose up slowly and turned towards Usagi.

"Are you okay...?"

"...Kusanagi...?"

That expression of Takeru's made her feel guilty.

It was the first time she saw him make such a worried expression.

Absent-mindedly, she unsteadily walked up to Takeru. She couldn't walk properly since her mind was worn out and she fell down towards Takeru as she reached him.

Takeru supported her body and hugged her.

After being hugged, Usagi finally understood the situation and blushed.

"?! I'm a-all right... I'm sorry, my legs tangled."

"Are you really okay? Did he do anything to you? Any injuries?"

"R-really, I'm all right I said... j-just.. umm..."

She lowered her head and after hesitating for a moment, she pressed her forehead on Takeru's chest armor.

"...I was just... really scared..."

Together with a weak voice, she sighed with relief.

Takeru stroked her head as she quietly cried on his chest.

It was different from Reima's, it was a casual act full of kindness which gradually comforted her heart.

"Usagi... sorry for leaving you like this... but it's not over yet."

"Fueh?"

Usagi was completely at ease, and looked up at him unfocused.

"I want you to go and help Mari... I'm sorry to say this in such a situation."

"...help Nikaido...? What are you talking about?"

"Ask Suginami for details. She should've come with a car loaded with weapons. There's no time, go."

When she saw Takeru's desperate face, she finally understood the seriousness of the situation.

"...Kusanagi, what are you going to do?"

"I'm going to clean up this guy. This much damage should be nothing."

Just as Takeru said, even though Reima was blown away he stood up with a groan. Usagi looked anxiously towards where Takeru's sword was pointing, anxiety appeared in her eyes.

*"Ill be fine. Rather than that, help Mari. There's no one to save her right now other than you. You're the only one I can count on."*

With a serious expression, he entrusted it to Usagi.

Honestly, there's no way she would agree to it after being asked to help someone all of a sudden and without any explanation. She didn't know or understand the situation. She had to protect her purity from a villain and had just shook off her trauma and before she noticed she's been dragged into a magical incident. She wondered 'what's going on?'. Reima suddenly assumed Hero form, Takeru rained down from the sky in Witch Hunter form, her brain couldn't keep up with it. On top of that, Mari was in a pinch. The fact that things progressed so fast while she wasn't in that place made her unhappy.

But, since she was told that only she could be counted on, there was no reason to pull out.

If it was Usagi from before, these words would be heavy enough to raise her tension and make her hyperventilate.

Although she couldn't get a grasp on situation at all, she felt like she could do anything right now.

"It cannot be helped, heh. Want me to save her? Then promise me."

"Promise?"

"Leave Nikaido to me, but you have to beat the shit out of that guy instead! That person tried to shame me! Spare him no mercy!"

"...leave it to me. I'll end this quickly and join you over there."

And her eyes started to wander around restlessly.

"After I save Nikaido... that's..."

Fidgeting, Usagi looked up at Takeru from under him.

"...from before... let's continue... emm..."

Although she wanted to tell to pat her head, she couldn't properly word it.

Takeru smiled wryly and shoulder his sword.

"Sure. Leave it to me, I'll pat your head all day long."

It was an unusually good guess, he readily agreed to it.

"...it's a promise!"

After, Usagi left with a joyous expression but soon enough her expression changed to a serious one.

She tore out a hem of the wedding dress that was in the way as she ran, her legs were bared. Usagi kicked off the floor and started running.

At that time, Reima who was blown away rose up.

"Usagiiiii...!"

Usagi didn't even give him a glance as he called out in resentment.

Reima stood up and tried to aim at her with the sword that was beside him,

"——I'll be your opponent."

A heavy voice that seemed like it was released by a beast from hell came from the side, stopping him from moving.

Fearfully, Reima faced forward.

And there——was a demon. Clad in azure-colored fighting spirit, a demon similar to Enma.

"I told you right. If it's to protect Usagi, I'll do anything."

"...hihh."

"I'm going to do as I said."

Takeru swung his sword horizontally and reversed the blade.

"Kusanagi Double-Edged style initiate, Kusanagi Takeru. Let me say this first——my fangs won't stop at biting!"

After seeing Takeru become a mass of killing intent, Reima took a step back.

However, the battle has already started. Takeru who was supposed to be in front was already gone. He was stunned for a moment, but he felt a thirst for blood below.

After he lowered his gaze, he found demonic eyes beneath him.

Red, red pupils. Eyes of a demon. The feeling concealed within were killing intent, murderous intent, just an intent to kill.

——I'll be killed!

Before a scream could leave his mouth, an impact and an explosion shook the church blowing Reima away.

It was late autumn, this time of year was celebrated as winter solstice, it was cold enough to be called winter.

Since it was late at night, moreover the place was the rooftop.

Mari had arrive on the rooftop of 14th school building, she didn't have time to take a deep breath, it was freezing cold.

"I-I'm g-glad that I w-wear a m-m-muffler..."

Her muffler was a memento given to her by the director who has raised her. While she had a policy to wear it even in summer, she really appreciated it now.

She looked around the rooftop and found her target.

She didn't even have to search for it, it's been unnaturally placed in the center of rooftop.

An ultramarine-colored sturdy box. It was a box made from anti-magic material in which recovered Magical Heritages were held.

As not to have any students or Inquisitors notice it, the Magical Heritage was held inside of it.

"It took a while... I need to hurry up."

Mari ran up and reached out to the box to ascertain its state.

The moment her finger touched the exterior, the box suddenly shattered.

"——Wha..."

She screamed in surprised as it broke into pieces. The magic inside was too strong, the anti-magic material couldn't withstand it and disintegrated.

In the center of the broken box was a dazzlingly brilliant crystal.

"...Demon Amethyst... it destroyed the anti-magic material."

Mari examined the material before touching the main body.

The Demon Amethyst is a material that has the opposite effect of the one anti-magic material have and is a magic-absorbent material. It's usually used to absorb magic that's causing magical disorders inside human bodies.

However, magic-absorbent material can also function as an instant charm. The most popular type of instant charms are made with the of magic-absorbent paper, Demon Amethyst is used to absorb a large amount of magic and cast a large-scale magic.

Originally the crystal has a purple color, but it color dulls as it absorbs magic and eventually becomes jet black.

The one in front of Mari was a jet black... it was proof of it holding an ultra-high density magic within.

Mari deployed a barrier around her body and slowly touched the crystal.

*Carrying it away... is impossible. Magic has doubled its weight. The built in operative procedure has already started... the chant is automatic, stopping it is impossible since it's an ultra-high speed playback. For now, I have to prioritize the destruction of "Master-Slave's" operative procedure. The time left until it triggers... eh, only t-ten minutes left? ...damn, gotta do it!*

She got rid of pointless thoughts and immediately started to dismantle the Magical Heritage.

Mari played "Master-Slave's" operative procedure in her head. This kind of spell couldn't be destroyed once assembled, unless a specialized magic is used, the entire place would be destroyed in the process.

Disrupting an operative procedure wasn't as simple as using an eraser to remove a character written on paper.

The method to stop it seems like retracing the written characters with the pen.

To do so, Mari traced the operative procedure, built and invoked it. She needed to trace it to the point it has progressed to, she had no choice but to do that.

As expected, the procedure was already in the middle of being assembled.

If it was an ordinary witch, they would've already blundered.

"——Sorry about that!"

Magical power flowed through the Demon Amethyst and traced the operative procedure.

"Master-Slave" was a spell Mari couldn't use, but she had its operative procedure in her head. Mephisto has incorporated an automated operation beforehand, it was a match between Mari and the operative procedure.

If she makes a mistake, she'll have to start over. But she didn't have time to start over.

Truly, a match during which she had only one try. She wasn't allowed to make a mistake.

"………… Nikaido, you're safe?"

She heard a voice from behind her, it happened right after she started to erase the operative procedure. At that moment, she nearly interrupted the process.

*This voice... Ootori Ouka...!*

There's no way she could've misheard the voice she hates so much.

However, currently Ouka was...

"Kusanagi told me to assist you here. What's the situation?"

Since it sounded like usual Ouka, Mari was puzzled for a moment.

"I'm relieved. I thought you'd be surrounded by enemies."

"…………"

"...Nikaido? You okay? Look over here and answer me. Why are you quiet?"

Ouka's caring voice reached her from behind.

Thanks to that, her confusion disappeared in an instant. Not at all, Mari spat out and laughed.

"U-umm... I've heard you're good at mimicry you know? What's with that poor acting of yours, can you not make me laugh? But if you want to disrupt my concentration, then it was a great success."

"…………"

"There's no way that woman would worry about me. In the first place, that woman rarely calls me by my surname. She's always using that rude 'you' of hers repeatedly."

Mari continued to break down the operative procedure and spoke to Ouka who was behind her. Ouka was silent for a while and sighed.

"I've been found out again... I don't really get it, but aren't students of this school a bit too straightforward? They should be more honest and act as their hearts dictate, it's hard to imitate how a tsundere girl acts."

Her tone changed from how Ouka sounded before, an eerie voice was mixed in as she spoke.

Mephisto who took the shape of Ouka aimed the muzzle at Mari's back.

Although Mari noticed it, she pretended not to and continued to work.

"What do you mean...? What do you want to say by that?"

"As I said, this girl's not being honest with herself, she's been worrying about you for a while now similarly to how I acted."

"........................could you not say something that creepy with this voice of yours?"

Even though she said that, Mari's eyes moistened a little bit.

Mephisto sighed and shook her head, then she approached with loud footsteps.

"Well, it can't be helped if I was found out. Nice to meet you～ I'm Mephisto. You're the "Witch of Aurora", are you not? We've never met, but you betrayed us and joined Inquisition."

Just as Mephisto knew about Mari, she knew a few things about Mephisto as well.

Since both of them were members of Valhalla, she heard about her.

Haunted had said that she had forgotten about who she was, becoming a ghost obsessed about her own body. Since there was no fair way to kill her, she was a horrible and cowardly person.

"The "Aurora" attribute is very tempting, by all means I want to take your body... however, I'm running low on 《Install》 charms... sorry, but you're dying here."

**click**, she felt a gun's muzzle being pressed to the back of her head.

There was no way for her to cope with it. Were she to stop concentrating, the operative procedure breakdown would fail.

"If I kill you Haunted will surely get angry. It seems that he likes you a lot... he might come after me to take my life."

"............!!"

"Well, that might be fun in its own way."

Mephisto pulled the gun's slide and put a finger on the trigger.

"This is... not good, is it?

She realized that she was in a huge pinch, and thoughts rotated in her head at full speed.

Should she take a risk and send a magic bullet behind her? No, the collar will react if she uses offensive magic. A protective barrier? No, the amount of magic power she was allowed by the collar is too low, it couldn't stop a bullet made out of anti-magic material.

"Ciaoo〜 miss Witch of Aurora. I'll send this girl after you soon enough, make sure to get along."

Dangerdangerdanger. Her head was filled with the word "danger".

*Shit! If it comes down to this, let's make a last desperate attempt!*

Acting in desperation, Mari bet everything and swung her fist behind her. That's when.

———**donn!**

She heard a sound of something clashing, Mari tried to look behind in surprise but it was unnecessary as something passed right beside her.

It was Mephisto, and Usagi who has tackled her from behind.

Usagi threw her arms around Mephisto's waist, went over the railing——and dived into the ground from the roof.

"EEEEHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH?!"

She involuntarily screamed and got worried that she might have failed to build operative procedure.

"She fell?! Usagi-chan fell down?! In a wedding dress?! Eeh?!"

Mari was shocked by the desperate attack and released her hand from the crystal, there was no way for her to ascertain Usagi's safety.

But immediately after she realized that Usagi wasn't at risk.

There was a long wire extending from the entrance of the roof towards the place she jumped from.

Cutting through the air, Usagi dived to the ground while embracing Mephisto.

"——You're the girl Reima's been wanting! Leaving it to that trash was a mistake!"

In the middle of the fall, Mephisto furrowed her brows with Ouka's face and yelled.

"You didn't follow through in the end, both you and Reima! You've underestimated me!"

Usagi firmly held Mephisto's waist and prepared for the shock.

"Tch...!!"

They stopped falling as the wire extended to its limit, pain hit Usagi's body as if she's been hit by a whip. She needed to detach herself somehow while not removing her grasp on Ouka. She instantly took a deep breath.

There was no time to lose. She was touching Mephisto. The current situation was no good.

As she raised her face, she saw Mephisto pull out a charm.

"As if... I'd let you!"

Usagi instantly released Mephisto's body, cut the wire attached to her legs with a knife. They were at height of about three meters, Mephisto hit the ground falling on her back, unable to take a proper posture, Usagi crashed right next to her.

Both of them moaned in pain, but stood up immediately after.

The first one to attack was Mephisto. Using Ouka's body she kicked towards Usagi's chin. Usagi guarded her face with both of her arms, however.

"——Guhh!"

Despite the guard she raised, her body was blown away. She was blown up and staggered.

Mephisto momentarily used that opportunity. She tread strongly on the ground with her left leg and performed a low roundhouse kick with the other leg, she changed the trajectory of the kick in the middle and performed a heel kick.

It hit Usagi's undefended right flank and pierced into her.

**krsh*, a sound of her rib cracking rang out.

Mephisto grabbed the staggering Usagi's neck and grinned.

"Possession's amazing isn't it. Even though the soul changes, the brain stays the same. Both combat experience and memory, as well as the senses remain the same."

The movements Mephisto made were exactly the same ones Ouka makes. In particular, the continuous powerful kicks, it was still fresh in her mind as she was hit by it several times during the training. Both the speed and its sharpness were going without saying, great but it was heavier than expected because she twisted her lower body right before hitting. Although when it comes to power Usagi wouldn't lose, the difference between their senses was like heaven and earth. She would never win in close quarters combat.

"There's not many left, but it would be irritating to have be interfered with again... let's change again."

From the bag at her waist Mephisto pulled out a piece of paper that looked like a parchment... taking out an instant charm.

Usagi acted though, she pulled out a gun from her waist and shot towards the instant charm.

The bullet shot through the magic circle, making it lose its function.

Mephisto was stunned by her resistance at this stage.

"Fu... fufufu, serves you right...!"

"Tchh——how dare you destroy my invaluable provisions!"

After being hit in the abdomen, Usagi was blown away backwards. In rapid succession, Mephisto pulled out a gun and shot towards where Usagi has fallen. Usagi rolled to the side in the nick of time and jumped to hide behind a tree.

She leaned her back on the tree's trunk, fixed her breathing and checked through her equipment in her head.

The number of weapons she received from Ikaruga was five. Handguns pre-loaded with both live and anesthesia ammo were hung at her waist.

A sub-machinegun loaded with anesthesia bullets was tied to her left leg. A knife was tied to her right leg.

And the Mosin-Nagan Usagi she continued to use during her training, her favorite weapon that was her Grandfather's keepsake, the same one "Belaya Smert" used. It was a good question whether an antique like this Mosin-Nagan which went through many battles was suitable, Ikaruga agreed on having her use it today as a special case, and followed through with it.

For Usagi, using a heavy rifle was hard. On the contrary, this gun was her favorite and she's been using it for many years. It could be said to be most suitable as it helped her to fight with stress.

Ikaruga passed her this gun, and two types of bullets that might kill Mephisto.

『"They are special anti-Mephisto shells. As for what they're made of, it's a trade secret."』

Ikaruga passed her a bullet made out of metal with discolored spots on it, and a silvery-bluish bullet.

『"When you're in a situation where you absolutely know that you will hit the target, implant this bullet into Ootori's bone. If that happens, Mephisto probably will leave her body. After that, hit the soul with this silver bullet when it comes out."』

She didn't understand under what principles it worked under, but she believed Ikaruga, it had to be done. To kill the enemy without killing Ouka, that was the only way.

"Ussaagii-chaaan〜 Come out〜. Play with Mephisto〜."

Together with the enemy's provocation came rapid gunfire. It grazed the tip of her clothes as well as shot off a piece of wood from the tree.

Usagi stood up impatiently. Although the inside might be different, her opponent was Ootori Ouka. The Mosin-Nagan had a long barrel and it was impossible to use it in close quarters. To exhibit a high enough accuracy to hit her bone, she needed to shoot from a stable position. She needed to make a little bit more distance.

"You're not coming out? Then, it can't be helped."

After Mephisto's suggestive voice, she heard a strange sound and it felt like the wind moved.

When she wondered what was happening, the ground below Usagi suddenly started to emit light.

"W-what's this?!"

As she looked over there, a small magical circle appeared under her feet.

She realized that Mephisto has set up some kind of magic there, although Usagi tried to move away from the place in a hurry, she was slightly late. The magic was invoked and a faint heat flowed through her body.

However, nothing happened. She didn't observe any abnormality in her body.

*...a bluff? It can't be——*

Just when she thought that, and peaked from behind the tree's shade,

"Bahhaha〜eye♪."

Mephisto ran away with her back turned to Usagi, raising a cheerful voice and waving to her.

——She ran away. Her objective is to activate the large-scale magic. And Mari was trying to stop it.

To murder her. She also needed to kill Usagi, but there was no need to fight her.

"Oh〜〜〜come on〜〜〜! I'm such an idiot!"

She cried out after making such a simple blunder and pulled out a gun from behind her back.

Although the enemy was on the run, she was vulnerable as she was turned away with her back to her. She reconsidered it, and thought of it as of a chance instead. If it was this distance, she could hit her shoulder bone that didn't move much.

"——Eeh?!"

But it didn't go well. Several students ran towards Mephisto.

She looked away from the scope and witnessed an extraordinary spectacle. Although she thought at first that the students gathered because they've heard the commotion, oddly, it seemed different. Both from the front, from the school building's windows and from behind. Countless students have rushed in.

Their eyes were bloodshot, they breathing rough. Every each one of them was strangely excited.

From the looks of it, they were under the effect of attraction magic. Moreover, the one they were attracted to wasn't the caster, for some reason it was Usagi.

"Can it be that the magic from before was...?!"

The magic she thought was a bluff, probably had an effect of transferring the attraction magic onto someone else. Mephisto had students attracted to Reima to allow her to use Magical Heritage, so she had no shortage of troops. Since attraction magic could only be used for simple things, it was impossible for them to fight properly... but using it like this was unexpected.

For them, Usagi seemed like something they wanted the most in entire world.

Currently Usagi was attractive enough for them to lose their sanity.

"Ngh... every each... one of them...!"

Usagi was surrounded by students who were breathing roughly and a blood vessel popped out on her temple. She pulled out a machine gun from her leg and handgun from her hip and set them up.

"Are you taking a maiden's purity lightly!!?"

She ran towards the middle of them in desperation and slid, slipping below their feet. After that she started a shooting spree from behind their backs with a machine-gun. She finished the students who came from further back with the handgun she had in her left hand.

It wasn't enough to allow her get rid of them. The students continued to pour out from behind the school building. She was unclear how many of them were under the effect of attraction, but she had no time to deal with them one by one.

"I have no time to stop in a place like this! I've made a promise!"

She clenched her teeth, and while fending off the students who attacked her, Usagi chased after Mephisto who headed towards the roof again.

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## The Glossary

**Belaya Smert** (ベーラヤ・スメルチ) - Written as (白き死神) meaning "White Death", of course a reference to Simo Häyhä.

**Demon Amethyst** (デモンアメジスト) - Written as (鈍色水晶) which means "Dark Gray Crystal".

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# Chapter 6 - Silver Bullet of Exorcism

Reima clashed into the gate with a lot of force, as he hit it while facing directly towards it, his ribs broke and collapse inwards.

"That hurts... wasn't the Hero form supposed to be invincible...?"

Certainly, normally it would make him nearly invincible. However, Tyrving is a common Nordic Magical Heritage. Its defensive ability was rather low, but it had a high regenerative ability instead. It healed all the wounds. Proving that, Reima's sank-in chest was soon fixed with a loud noise.

"Ghyaaa!"

He cried as his chest was being regenerated. For Reima who hates pain, this Magical Heritage wasn't a good match.

Takeru moved with heavy footsteps towards the screaming Reima.

"What happened. Your wounds have healed, this battle has yet to start."

"H-hiiihhh."

"Come on, stand up."

As the demon incarnate was looming upon him, Reima started to fall back in fear.

No matter how he looked at him, Takeru was furious. That appearance of him holding a sword made him wonder if Takeru was really a human. Unlike Takeru who learned swordsmanship since he was young, Reima had no idea how to use a sword, he never held a sword in his hands before.

Someone like that standing up to Takeru, was a silly notion.

"Fuck, fuck... fuckfuckfuck! F-fine! I'll show you how special I am!"

Reima stood up unsteadily as his waist was trembling.

Takeru didn't laugh at that display of guts. Although Reima's personality was the worst, he re-evaluated him after seeing his guts. He was impressed by the fact that even a man like him had his pride. Were he to cry for help, he would've half-killed Reima in an instant, but seeing this Takeru revised his idea.

Holding back would've been the worst insult for his opponent.

Therefore, in order to honor Reima's fighting spirit——Takeru once again plunged towards him at full strength.

Maybe his mettle was conveyed, as Reima lowered his waist poising.

"Shit... shitttttt〜〜〜!"

After holding his sword in a stance similar to that of holding a baseball bat, Reima started to run. Rather than meeting the enemy head-on, Takeru stepped forward and plunged towards Reima's eye.

When it comes to reach, Takeru had an advantage, moreover Reima was full of openings.

There was a 100% chance Takeru's stab would reach him.

That's how it should've been.

——**ginnnnn**

A sound of blades clashing rang out, surprising Takeru. A miserably-looking swing of Reima's has firmly caught Takeru's sword.

He didn't go easy on Reima anyhow. And yet, his sword was stopped. Reima was also surprised. His terrified expression that seemed like he was about to cry changed into a joyous one after seeing the result of that strike.

"E-eha-ehahahahaha! Did'ya see that! How special I am!"

That blow was evenly matched, or rather, Reima had the upper hand.

Takeru started to see a difference as they started to exchange blows. The strength he uses isn't extraordinary and his posture was very awkward, just what is this strength?

"What is it Kusanagi! Where's your spirit from before! Weren't you acting so cool just a moment ago? Is this how far your swordsmanship goes?! It looks like a skill even an amateur like me can use!"

As his swordsmanship was insulted, anger erupted within Takeru, but he didn't pull out yet.

*What's up with this strength...!*

Sensing danger, Takeru tried to fix his posture and dodge.

However, the moment his blade retracted, his shoulder was slash with an incredible speed.

"HYAHAHAHAHAHA! Feels good! Next——let's goo!"

He aimed at the fallen Takeru and released another strike from a natural posture.

——*Fast!*

At a speed he couldn't keep up with, Reima's thrust approached.

He tried to avoid triggering Soumatou, but at that moment Reima's thrust increased its speed even further.

The thrust hit Takeru's flank and gouged out the high-concentration magical armor, cutting through the skin.

"What ya doing dazing off there, next one, nextt!"

Reima showered him with continuous random strikes.

It was truly messed up. An attack resembling that of a kid waving a wooden stick.

However, all of those attacks deflected Takeru's sword and hit his body.

After beating him during multiple exchanges, he approached Reima's collarbone.

Even so, no matter how many times he attempted that, Takeru's strikes were taken down by Reima.

"With this you must've understood it Kusanagi! I'm excellent at doing anything, I dominate at everything! I'm going to reign over everything! The destiny of a scum like you ends right here!"

No matter how he tried to prevent it, no matter how he tried to avoid it, it was all in vain.

Before he noticed, Takeru's body had a number of small wounds on it.

He was overwhelmingly outmatched. It was an absolute crisis.

After being hit by so many attacks, he should no longer be able to stand up.

"…………"

However it was just the opposite, in the middle of Reima's attack Takeru had regain composure.

With a cool head, he continued to attack Reima.

《"...Lapis"》

He noticed something and called out to Lapis.

She guessed what Takeru thought and responded flatly.

《"The identity of enemy's Magical Heritage discovered. Its name is Tyrving."》

《"Haven't heard of it before, western swords aren't my specialty... but ain't that quite a sharp sword?"》

《"Yes. Just like Dáinsleif, it's a cursed sword from northern Europe. It's intrinsic performance ——"》

《"Is to always hit the enemy with its attacks... right?"》

Takeru said it before Lapis could answer.

《"Yes. Apart from the Hero form benefits, its performance allows it to hit any target that's in the line of sight. No matter how far the distance from the target is or what obstacles are in between, the attacks will always hit. It's an S-ranked Magical Heritage. Only by considering it's intrinsic performance, one could say it's capability is beyond that of Dáinsleif's."》

《"Certainly, it's an amazing sword."》

《"Although I do not want to admit it, but there aren't many swords that are more excellent than this one. It's a very outstanding sword."》

《"Yeah, but that's all there is."》

With disappointment, Takeru looked into Reima's eyes.

Reima continued to attack, full of himself. Again and again and again.

"Cry, scream and admit it! That I'm the strongest!"

Again and again and again and again.

"Ha-hahaha! You're too scared to even let your voice out! How about you say something!"

Again and again and again and again and again and again and again.

"Ha-ha... ha?! Eh... this is weird... hey...?"

That moment, Reima tried to land countless strikes on Takeru.

"Why, whyy...!"

And yet,

"Why won't you fallllllllll!"

Reima screamed, and got scared of Takeru who was in front of him.

Takeru abandoned his defense, he lowered his hands and just continued to move his body slightly right before the attack hit him.

After looking carefully, the damage dealt to him was low... no, it would be better described as scratches.

Seeing Reima act all flustered with this odd situation, Takeru spoke.

"It's a really sharp sword. It allows you to hit anything within your line of sight... I think those who fight with a sword are a perfect prey for it."

"Damn! Damn it!!"

"But that's all. Your sword's performance allows you only to hit the enemy. Although it seems to grant you near-divine protection until it hits, but it only persists until you hit the enemy. That means that after you hit, all that left is the user's ability."

As he said that, Takeru received Reima's slash.

At the same time he's was hit, he twisted his body and attacked. Up until this moment, he twisted his body the moment the attack was about to hit and used that strength to parry.

This time not with a blade, but he received the flow with his body. It was a technique a skilled swordsman could use.

Although he initially used Soumatou to parry, this time he parried it with his normal eyesight.

Certainly, Reima's attack was fast and strong.

But that was all. After it hit, dealing with its power was a child's play.

The user's ability didn't keep up with the sword's performance.

《"Lapis, dull the blade."》

《"Dull it?"》

《"Yeah, I want it so that my sword won't cut him."》

The blade was dulled, the nodachi Takeru was using was now similar to a wooden sword.

Immediately after parrying Reima's attack——Takeru caught Tyrving's blade with his hand.

The continued attacks ceased.

"...uw...a...?!"

"I understand it very well, Tenmyouji Reima."

"............!"

"You've shown me your mettle. That's enough."

He closed his eyes and said it quietly. But despite what was said, when Reima tried to pull the sword out of Takeru's grasp, it wouldn't budge.

As Reima tried to pull out the sword in a hurry, Takeru's eyes turned red like eyes of a demon.

"Next——is my turn."

That moment, at a speed Reima couldn't even capture the pommel of Takeru's sword was stuck into his face.

A blow with the strength of an artillery strike smashed Reima's nose and made his face cave-in.

Reima staggered backward and attempted to scream, but no sound came out.

Immediately after that,

"Kusanagi True Light style——Wolf's Blade."

Takeru lowered his body to the limit, and from below, he drew his sword right under the enemy's chin. A blow similar to the bite of a wolf that aims for its prey's throat, it broke Reima's jaw with a loud sound and forcibly launched him into the air.

Reima's body slammed into the church's ceiling and began to slowly fall onto the floor.

"Shark's Blade."

Before Reima could fall onto the floor, Takeru positioned himself below where his back would be and released a strike from the sheath.

"——Ghahh!"

Reima spit blood after being hit in the back. His body was slightly lifted again, and he was pounded from above instead of below this time.

With a rumbling sound, Reima's body slammed into the ground and crushed the wooden floor.

"Aa...ga...!"

"Rhino's Blade."

Takeru thrust his sword into the floor in a rapid succession, raising Reima's body from the ground with it.

He grabbed Reima's neck who was about to fall down along with the debris by using his left hand, he had accelerated with Soumatou to catch him before he was blown away.

The moment he grasped him, a loud sound came from Reima's neck, no problem. A human who turned into Hero form wouldn't die just because his neckbone was broken. It regenerated soon enough.

While still holding his neck, Takeru pulled his sword back. He moved Reima's body so that he could see his face in front of him.

"Tenmyouji Reima... how about you say that again."

"Gi...gah... fo-forgive..."

"Swordsmanship's... what?"

The pair of eyes on the crushed face continued to shed tears and look at Takeru pleading for forgiveness.

At the same time, Reima's solar plexus was pierced with the sword's tip.

"B...GUEAAAAAAA...!"

After hearing a scream, Takeru retracted the tip and pulled the sword back.

"So, who does Usagi belong to?"

"...u...ae..."

"Whose belonging is she?"

"Gi...ve.. to you... her... she's yours..."

"——Wrong."

With a roar, he pierced Reima.

"She's not an object!——She is my comrade!"

Takeru pulled his shoulder to the limit, and a sound of bones creaking filled the air.

"Kusanagi True Light style——Hornet's Blade."

And he released a storm of thrusts.

Its intensity was akin to that of a Gatling gun, a huge amount of holes was opened up in Reima's armor and body. Rather than ten or twenty of them, he had about a hundred of holes drilled in his body.

Kusanagi True Light style was originally an anti-personnel style derived from Kusanagi Double-Edged style. Compared to Double-Edged style which was created for dealing with non-human beings, its hits and hit rate were exceptionally fast, but it's power was greatly inferior. Moreover, Takeru ignored the key points that could potentially lead to an enemy's instant death. In the first place, Takeru wasn't doing it out of kindness, the reason he had his sword dulled was not because of that.

It's because he promised Usagi.

He promised her to thoroughly beat this man up.

After being hit by the last furious thrust, Reima crashed in a way that resembled being crucified.

Without any strength, he slid off and collapsed on the floor. Reima tried to catch his breath while shedding tears.

If it wasn't for the Hero form's improved regeneration ability, he would've been dead a long time ago.

"Uu...khh... ha-gah...aa..."

Reima's awareness wasn't clear yet, he gripped his sword. But he didn't do it because he was willing to fight.

It was because he knew that if he doesn't hold onto it, he'll die. Since it was clear now that begging Takeru to spare his life was pointless, he had no choice but to hold on to it. No matter how he apologizes, Takeru won't forgive him. He was just a miserable lump of meat that could only fight back. If he lets go of his sword and the Hero form were to be dissolved, he wouldn't be able to withstand a single blow.

I don't want to die. I don't want to die. I don't want to die before I'm acknowledged by someone.

With tenacity, Reima continued to hold his sword.

Therefore, Tyrving granted him that wish. The mute treasured sword was said to grant three wishes according to the legend.

First, to recognize Reima as his owner. Second, to turn the user's body into that of a Hero.

And the third——allowing him to avoid death in the current situation.

That was Tyrving's intrinsic magic, 《Destiny's Enchantment》.

It was an ultimate wish-granting magic. Beneath where Reima was lying like a wet rag, a golden magical circle appeared.

Reima was encouraged by the intimidation that flowed from the sword and was forced to recover.

"I don't care any longer... if I am to come back to life... there's no need for it to end here! I'll sacrifice anything! So acknowledge my fate, Tyrving!"

The golden magic was invoked and raged along the sword's blade.

His desire to live has taken shape, it was a pure craving.

In front of that superb distortion, Takeru braced himself and rekindled his fighting spirit.

《"Lapis."》

《"Acknowledged."》

After her reply, an azure magical circle appeared below his feet.

Takeru sheathed his sword, bent his knees twisted his body to one side sinking his waist.

He accumulated force in that form, preparing the the sword-drawing technique. Takeru put strength into his right hand; squeezing the handle, ready to draw his sword. His left hand rather than holding the sheath, just the left thumb was holding the sword's guard. As the right hand accumulated force, the left acted like a clasp.

The right hand and left thumb of his caused a rattling noise, accumulating repulsive force.

Although it was irregular, his posture was well-honed. Reima who stood against him had a distorted shape that embodied his tenacity.

A moment after the two displayed their ways, the two clashed.

"As if I'd——let myself dieeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!"

"Kusanagi Double-Edged style——Heavenly Evil Spirit!!"

With a flash. Their strikes turned into light and clashed head-on.

As magical power exploded, the church was blown in all directions leaving only it's frame.

Reima was the dominant one. Tyrving's intrinsic performance was exerted and Takeru's blow was being gradually pushed away. Due to the effect of 《Destiny's Enchantment》, its power was further doubled.

Takeru pulled his sword's edge towards his left shoulder, his sword's guard approached him.

Although he repelled it for a moment, he was unable to deny Tyrving's ability to lead fate.

"DDDIIIIIIIIIIIEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE...!"

As Reima screamed like mad, the golden magic further bestowed mythical power upon him.

The sword granting the magic called destiny, Tyrving.

That legend was unquestionably real, it was just like the stories said.

However.

The one that resisted the sword, was one that boasted having the strongest performance——

——Was the magical sword that swallowed the so-called destiny magic.

《Twilight Enchantment》

Whether it's fate or God's will, it didn't matter.

As long as it's magic, it must be constructed according to the laws of magic.

It was swallowed——in its entirety.

"That's... i-it should be power to decide fate... and yet, why...?!"

Reima watched as the golden magic was being drawn into Takeru's sword and raised a pathetic voice. Although the effect that allowed him to hit the target wasn't lost, the fate allowing him to avoid death has been devoured and exhausted.

Takeru moved his sword's handle forward, and Mistilteinn's blade that was rubbing against Tyrving's slipped. Naturally, Tyrving's tip that was aimed at Takeru's heart had thrust in.

However, that was all. It hit, but Tyrving was flicked off by the armor. A strike from Reima who has lost his will to fight was unable to even scratch the armor.

The light disappeared, silence came.

Reima trembled and looked at Takeru in front of him who poised his sword high into the air.

"P-plea...se... save m——"

As Reima begged for help, Takeru quietly shook his head.

After raising his nodachi very high up, its shape changed to that of a huge great sword. As the absorbed magic power inverted, the blade started to shine and it was raised exaggeratedly high.

He held out one feet, and just swung down the sword straight down in front of him.

"Kusanagi Double-Edged style——Baboon Menace!"

After hearing a demonic roar, Reima's heart was stricken with fear and he was engulfed by light.

On the destroyed church's site, stood Takeru swinging down his sword.

The crushing blow clad in enchantment's power vanished without a trace.

And so has Reima's heart.

With drool flowing from his mouth, Reima stood up while showing the whites of his eyes. The blade Takeru swung down cut through Reima's hair and stopped right before making contact with his scalp.

Originally, Baboon Menace worked as a feint used against fantastical organisms. The big show started by poising the sword up high, as well as releasing killing intent to horrify the enemy.

It seemed like in Reima's case, it wasn't to help Takeru find an opportunity to strike. Reima's spirit collapsed, and he lifelessly slid onto the ground.

After witnessing Reima collapsing, Takeru silently sheathed the sword.

《"Is this fine?"》

Lapis asked him whether it was fine not to kill him.

"I haven't promised Usagi to kill this guy, I don't think there's any worth in killing him."

He looked down on Reima and said so coldly.

"Above all... I don't want you to be stained with the blood of a guy like that."

As he said so casually, he felt like the sword housed in its sheath rattled.

He looked at the sword by his waist, at Lapis.

"Did something happen?"

《"No. Nothing."》

"...it might have been my imagination, but aren't you trembling?"

《"No such thing. What are you saying Host, I do not understand."》

"I-is that so..."

Sorry, involuntarily he apologized.

As Takeru stood above Reima, after hitting the ground Tyrving slipped away from Reima's hand.

"Looks like we can't leave it here like that. Lapis, please make a sheath for it."

As he took Tyrving which emitted dim light, and made a request to Lapis.

《"............"》

"What is it? Hurry up, we need to join Usagi and the others."

《"...are you going to form a contract with Tyrving?"》

Flatly. Emotionless. However, there was some pressure in Lapis' voice and figure of speech.

"Huh?"

《"I shall not stop you, but if you want to change your contract for one with Magical Heritage, you will have to discard your contract with me. At the same time, you will be targeted by Inquisition. Are you fine with that?"》

"N-no, I had no such intention. I just want to recover it. If it's a sheath made by you, it can suppress magical power leakage thus making it less likely for it to be stolen by someone right?"

《"Although there are parts inferior to mine's, its intrinsic performance is better than mine. However, do not forget there's a "Curse" that comes with it. After you use its magic to grant you three wishes——"》

"I won't use it, I won't! The only sword I'm going to use is you!"

After Takeru desperately denied it, Lapis' accelerating voice suddenly stopped.

《"Is that so. That's fine then."》

Again, she responded with a flat voice. But unlike earlier, this time it didn't make him feel intimidated.

He made a hard to describe expression and hurried to where Mari was breaking down the operative procedure.

By kicking off the ground, as he jumped from one school building to other, he glanced at his favorite sword that he held in his hands.

*What's that... for a while now, she continues to look at me with suspicion.*

For some reason, Takeru felt like a husband who's being suspected for cheating.

On top of a rooftop lashed by cold wind, Mari continued to struggle against a single Magical Heritage. She was unable to warm her hands up even though they hurt, and was proceeding with operative procedure destruction in a hurry.

*...just a little bit more and I'll catch up with the automatic procedure...!*

Tracing the route up until the point where the magic is activated would put a tremendous strain on a witch even if it was a regular spell. When it came to such a large-scaled and unique magic, it was a strain on the mind beyond imagination.

"After I'm done with this, Ootori Ouka will have to acknowledge me for sure...!"

While aspiring to get such a trivial reward, Mari continued to endure the penance.

Five minutes were left until the magic activates. She would barely make it.

"——Okay. That's enough."

The moment she opened her eyes after suddenly hearing a voice, an impact hit Mari's shoulder.

"Kyaa!"

With a scream, she nearly fell on the floor.

Mari barely managed to hold out. She gritted her feet and concentrated on her work by using all of her brain's power. Although she understood what happened to her, she gave priority to working on the operative procedure.

Her shoulder was strangely hot, but she didn't feel any pain.

She had been shot by Mephisto who came to the rooftop once again.

"I missed ehh. Then, one more."

After speaking with an innocent tone, Mephisto tried to fire another bullet.

"——Mari!!"

On the rooftop of school building, Mephisto saw a knight clad in azure armor appear right in front of her. The knight leaped in and raised his sword. He landed in with his back facing Mari, turned off the booster and made a protective stance.

"Tch... another Relic Eater!"

Mephisto released rapid fire at Takeru, but none of the bullets reached him, they were cut down by his sword. With his sword poised, Takeru stood in front of Mephisto.

"It's over, Mephisto... I'll have you return Ootori!"

Despite the fact she stood in front of Takeru in Witch Hunter form, Mephisto kept her cool. On the contrary, she smiled feeling as if she had a margin to spare.

"Leave Ootori's body! If you don't, I'll have to take your life!"

Takeru indicated that there's room for negotiation, but Mephisto couldn't stand it and laughed it off.

"AHHAHAHAHAHAHAHA! You won't take my life? Life you say?! There's no such thing as life for me! I'm just a ghost that's haunting this girl. Can you kill a soul? Even if your Relic Eater absorbs magic, it cannot kill a soul?"

"You bastard...! If you're not coming out then...!"

"Try it! Let's fight! But it won't be me fighting——it's this girl!"

After yelling out that declaration, Mephisto moved his hands forward.

"Summis desiderantes affectibus——"

He recognized the listed out words and was horrified.

Mephisto made a distorted laughter with Ouka's face.

"——Malleus Maleficarum!"

That moment, emerging from a crimson magic circle on the ground, something that seemed like a black coffin appeared.

The coffin broke and two huge pistols appeared from inside.

Mephisto grasped them with both of her hands and aimed them at Takeru.

"Impossible——she can use the Relic Eater?!"

《"The one performing a contract with Relic Eater isn't the flesh but the soul."》

"That's why I ask, why?!"

Puzzled, Takeru asked Lapis, but was answered by Mephisto instead.

"Vlad was the one who fell before this girl's soul did. Although I've been constantly looping heinous things she did in the past and also her trauma, she's quite stubborn. Just when I was supposed to proceed more brutally, this gun proposed that I use him in exchange for relieving her. I guess he could no longer watch his master being broken, a Magical Heritage that cares about his master!"

With a gesture as if she was to lick the barrel, Mephisto stuck out the strangely-long tongue.

"Hehh, she's crying in such a lovely voice. Mama, Papa; Shizuku, forgive me... oh right right, she's been calling your name too. Kusanagi～ Kusanagi～ and so on! Gyahahaha! You're a bit late, Kusanagi-kuuun!"

He grit his teeth strong enough to have his back teeth creak.

Takeru's murderous intent towards Mephisto who destroyed Ouka's heart was at its peak.

"I'll drag you out right this moment and kill you off!"

"I wonder if you can——are you going to kill this giirl～?"

Mephisto squeezed the trigger of the gun she was holding in the left hand firing a shining stake.

Takeru triggered Soumatou and to protect Mari behind him, he tried to cut down the stake with Lapis' blade.

——However, the moment Lapis touched the stake.

《"!!!!"》

Just when he thought he heard Lapis take a deep breath, the armor he was wearing suddenly shattered.

Suddenly, Takeru's Witch Hunter form was released, he was at loss for words.

"Lapis?!"

《"...nh, it's Vlad's intrinsic performance."》

Loudly laughing, Mephisto aimed the gun she held in her left hand at Takeru.

"Don't you know about this Relic Eater's performance? As long as the operative procedure is known, it can pierce through any kind of magic. The operative procedure of Witch Hunter form... what a shame, it's already in this girl's head."

"...shit!!"

"Witch Hunter form is something like a replica of Hero form. The magical enhancement system is delicate, so if you make a hole in it, it's going to be released at once."

While saying that, Mephisto fired a bullet from the gun in her right hand.

《"You...can't——avoid... it."》

Although he heard Lapis' breaking voice, Takeru couldn't avoid it. Mari was behind him.

He had no choice other than to use Soumatou and change the trajectory of stake so that it hit his flesh and blood. The stake's power was unimaginable, he was blown away when trying to change its trajectory.

"GUAhh..."

Although he avoided fractures, the muscle fibers in his arm were violently torn apart. Moreover he was blown away and Mari's back has become completely unguarded. Mephisto aimed at Mari immediately.

"I won't let you!!"

Takeru kicked off the floor jumping as strongly as possible to shield Mari once again. The stake was fired, and he tried to block it with his sword. With just his own flesh and blood he couldn't completely block it, and the stake pierced his right shoulder.

Just like that, his meat was gouged out and his bones broken. Blood started to spew like a mountain.

He held out a feet in front, and seemed like he was rooted to the spot as he protected Mari.

"You're doing your best with just your flesh and blood body. But that power... Soumatou right? It should put a terrible burden on your body? I wonder how long will it last."

Looking at Takeru with a mocking smile, Mephisto spun the gun around her finger with a practiced motion.

Since his right shoulder was crushed, Takeru held his sword with just his left hand.

《"I... apologize. I will... rebuild the procedure immediately... and... heal... the wounds."》

Lapis' voice was disconnecting. Vlad's stake could even penetrate operative procedures ran by Magical Heritage. It's the same as the time when it penetrated and neutralized King Arthur's sheath. It was different from the operative procedure breakdown Mari was doing, it's a cheat-level performance that drills holes inside of magic that build up the operative procedure with anti-magical enchantment. If it hits the surface of a Magical Heritage like Lapis, its operative procedure is engraved directly and has an effect similar to hitting the brain directly and stunning the target.

Witch Hunter form is one of the top-level intrinsic magic, it takes a considerable amount of magic as well as complex operative procedures. It's reconstruction is further delayed by stun-effect of the anti-magic stakes.

Even if he was to enter the Witch Hunter form, there was no choice but to avoid touching the stakes with the sword or the same result would have been repeated. Mari behind him also had copious amounts of blood flowing from her shoulder, she would have fallen were she to be hit by anything.

He has to protect her. She's dismantling the Magical Heritage at the risk of her own life.

*At least... until Usagi comes, I can't let myself fall! With her here, there's still a chance...!*

Takeru grasped his sword's handle with his left hand and clenched his teeth.

*I can't allow her to fire any more of them——don't pull back! Buy time by closing the distance!*

He kicked off the ground, and rammed into Mephisto while using Soumatou.

At the same time, Mephisto fired a stake. Takeru changed the stake's trajectory with his guts and willpower before he crashed into Mephisto.

The sword and two pistols crashed, their line of sight has met up from up close.

"AHAhahaha! How is it? Exchanging killing blows with someone you vowed to walk together with? It's the first time you fought ever since the death match in the middle school, I remember it〜"

"Don't talk about Ouka's memories, you bitch!"

"Ahha! Although you always call her "Ootori" you called her "Ouka"! Good for her! This girl is really happy about it!"

"Ng-gaaaaaaahhhh...!!"

The shackles on his mind went down, and he got furious. However, it was impossible for him to kill her. Although Mephisto's soul was in control, the body was Ouka's.

Were he to kill Mephisto in this situation, Ouka would also die. Even though he was angry enough to lose his reason, he couldn't forget about it.

While standing against Takeru, Mephisto closed her eyes relaxed.

"...it seems like that girl's coming back. Although she's just a scarecrow, just how did she managed to break through so many of them."

She probably meant Usagi. She might have noticed her, but at this rate she'll be caught in pincer attack by Usagi at this rate. The chance to win would increase remarkably if that happens.

Although she showed some impatience, Mephisto laughed eerily and grinned.

"Ohh〜 I've come up with something nice〜 ♪. How about we test your friendship right here."

She made a suggestive expression and stuck out her long tongue.

On top of her tongue, there was an instant charm with a magical circle painted on it. One of Mephisto's hands gently touched Takeru's which held the sword.

"Let's see——just how strong is the bond between you guys!"

With these words, he trembled with fear.

*This is bad——!*

Takeru realized what Mephisto was thinking and tried to put strength in his leg to pull away.

"Nikaido! Are you safe?"

The one who entered the roof was Usagi, where the horrified Takeru waited.

Right after she opened the heavy door with a kick, she was astonished by the situation at hand.

Mari was injured, Takeru had wounds all over his body and Ouka was aiming two guns at him.

Without any hesitation, Usagi aimed the "Belaya Smert" towards Ouka.

"——Saionji?! W-what's going on?! W-wait, don't shoot! Mephisto isn't inside me!"

Suddenly, while shouting that Ouka directed her gun towards Usagi.

Usagi's shoulder trembled, and she alternated looking between Takeru and Ouka.

"I don't get it what is this situation... why am I here?"

"Ootori? Are you really Ootori herself?"

"...I-I guess so. Suddenly I regained my body... and."

Ouka shook her head, she seemed to be confused after suddenly regaining consciousness.

"Then, Mephisto is...?"

Usagi moved her line of sight from Ouka and looked at Takeru.

Takeru had a difficult expression as well, and looked towards Usagi.

She understood what Mephisto did, and bit her lip.

*...she's the worst, that witch!*

Because of the situation Mephisto arranged, Usagi's heartbeat sped up.

——It was unknown who Mephisto was inside of.

For Usagi who held the decisive factor to beat Mephisto, it was the worst situation possible.

Takeru turned his sword towards Ouka and Ouka aimed her gun at Takeru. Mari was working on breaking down the Magical Heritage's operative procedure but the possibility of her being possessed couldn't be denied.

What to do? What should she do?

"It's Kusanagi... Kusanagi must've protected that woman... then, it's unlikely for her to be inside Nikaido Mari... if it's Kusanagi, he wouldn't let my possessed self get anywhere close to her."

"?!"

"It's all right... as long as there's a Relic Eater, Kusanagi's soul should be all safe for a while. I've already experienced that, and regained my body safely."

It seemed like Ouka decided that Mephisto is inside Takeru, and she squinted bitterly.

"Saionji... it might be hard for you, but let's capture Kusanagi together... if it's just me, I'm not strong enough to go against him."

Usagi was confused, the gun in her hand was trembling and she didn't know what to do. Takeru didn't say anything and exhaled painfully.

"You... want me to shoot... in a situation like this...?!"

"If you don't shoot, it's all over! Believe me...! Mephisto is right behind Mari right now!"

Both Ouka's tone of voice and the mercilessness was just like her.

If it's Ouka, then she would surely shoot Takeru in order to protect Mari who was dismantling the Magical Heritage. If she was the real thing, and Takeru was the fake that's definitely what she would do.

However, there was a different possibility in her head. What if Ouka lied, and Mephisto is still inside of her? She would put Takeru through tremendous amount of pain and Mephisto could kill Mari using that opportunity. And if she did the opposite, and shot her not believing in her words, Mephisto inside of Takeru could use that chance to kill Mari.

Which one is it? Which choice is correct? How can she save both of them? Her breathing sped up and her body started to tremble lightly.

*At a time... like this...!*

She couldn't afford to hyperventilate here, Usagi clenched her teeth.

With her determination she released herself from the Saionji's curse as well as overcame her trauma and bit Reima... and now, a new disorder appeared for her.

If she makes a mistake here, not only her comrades but all the citizens in the city will pay for it.

The strongest pressure she has ever felt has struck Usagi. A situation in which she had no choice but to shoot her comrade. Takeru turned his sword towards Ouka, Ouka aimed her gun at Takeru... what should she do? If she doesn't decide, everyone will die. Because of her, everyone will lose their lives.

"Haa... haa...! Fuu...!'

Her breathing turned rough, her vision hazy.

Memories about her comrades flashed through her mind, getting in the way and not allowing her to shoot them.

*Don't cry! Don't cry don't cry don't cry! I... only I can resolve this situation! No one else can do it!*

While bearing it, not crying and still lost, Usagi aimed——and settled at Ouka.

"...Saionji..."

"Kusanagi right now... is protecting Nikaido's back. You are Mephisto...!"

"..................is that so."

Seeing Ouka act so sadly, Usagi desperately endured despite her muzzle shaking.

"Our relationship wasn't long enough yet... there's no wonder... that you don't believe me. When we first met, I've told you many horrible things... it might be late to say that now, but I'm sorry."

"...ngh."

"However, just this once, believe me! If you shoot me here and now, it's all over! The school, the city, our comrades will be beyond help! Are you really fine with that?"

It was a compelling question. Ouka spoke aloud the same question Usagi has been asking herself. Usagi's muzzle further shook.

"Usagi."

That's when Takeru who has been silent finally called out to her.

He raised his face and stared right at Usagi.

"If you're in doubt... then shoot me."

Both Ouka and Usagi were astonished by these words.

"After shooting me, shoot Ootori. If it's your rapid fire, you should be able to do it."

"...what..."

"It's all right. Neither me nor Ootori will die. You will shoot both of us, and save both of us."

"......Kusanagi."

"We believe in you, so you too... *believe in us.*"

In Takeru's straight-looking eyes, there was no anxiety nor lies.

"...——Yes!!"

Usagi replied strongly.

Her trembling has come to a complete stop. The muzzle's aim was still settled at Ouka.

She isn't going to believe either of them. She won't take any of them as fakes.

At this moment, in front of her both of them were the real thing.

That's why, she has to shoot. It's fine as long as she hits their bones with the spotted bullet. Even if both of them are hurt, both of them are saved. It rules out the 'what if' possibilities.

"If I can save you both by shooting you——I will shoot!"

She no longer hesitated.

After looking at her determined eyes——

"...disgusting."

——Ouka spat out an insult. What appeared on her face, wasn't fear but disgust.

Mephisto who was residing inside Ouka revealed her real nature.

"Disgusting disgusting, it's damn disgusting! I hate self-sacrifice the most! It's the first time I see someone creepy enough to let himself get shot to make someone believe him! You should've shown me a fierce infighting instead like all other guys did! That's how humans should act!"

With her face twisted in displeasure, Mephisto put a finger on the guns that aimed for both of them.

"Enough! Whatever happens, in this situation I'm going to win!"

Mephisto glanced at Usagi with a grimace on her face.

"You can't kill me can you? And if I survive I'm going to kill you both! Is that fine with you? If not, then lower your weapons right now... even now I can make it so that "Master-Slave" won't affect you."

Just as Mephisto judged it, neither Takeru nor Usagi could kill Ouka. Even if they shot her hand or foot, Mephisto who was being enhanced by Relic Eater could ignore it and pull the trigger.

If that happens, Takeru aside, Usagi would probably die.

Even though she knew that, Usagi didn't lower her muzzle. She wasn't prepared to get shot, because she didn't think her comrade would shoot her.

Takeru was the same, he was holding his sword ready to jump at any time.

"'That so... then as you wish, let's have comrades kill each other!"

Mephisto put strength into the finger holding the trigger.

Usagi held her breath to steady her aim and Takeru triggered Soumatou to sharpen his senses.

Under these circumstances, the first one to move was——

"...a...gu...wh-what's this?!"

Was Mephisto. But it wasn't an attack. Suddenly, her body staggered.

Both Usagi and Takeru opened their eyes wide at this spectacle.

"Wh...at's th..s...?!"

Mephisto's body was trembling as if paralyzed.

"Body's...struggling...why...this girl...!"

Her arms that aimed the muzzles had convulsions. Ouka's body seemed like it rejected Mephisto's instructions.

That appearance, it was as if Mephisto was being manipulated by something...

No, that's wrong. Two people at the same time denied each other's thoughts.

It was a reverse situation. It was——Ouka trying to take her body back.

"I won't let myself... Ootori... Ouka... to be dirtied any more than this!"

It wasn't said by Mephisto, it was obvious for the two.

Ouka's own voice spun the words. Although only temporarily, she has come back. Ouka had a pained expression, which intermingled with Mephisto's expression. But what was mixed in there, was certainly her own expression.

"I've heard everything...! Your profane thoughts... voices of my comrades, everything! That's why I've returned! That is why I was able to come back!"

"You shouldn't be able to come out! You've been curled up up until now! Even though I've been playing your gruesome past to you...!"

With such a trauma engraved within her, there is no way she could withstand it. Even without devouring her soul, it was already weakened and the initiative was on Mephisto's side.

"In the end, what you showed me was just an illusion... the hell I've tasted, was nowhere near that level...!"

"You've fallen to it once already... what an insolent mouth of yours...!"

"So what, I will get up no matter how many times! There is no way... I'd lose to a witch like you...!"

Mephisto struggled against Ouka's soul and writhed unsteadily.

For Mephisto who took down souls that didn't show any resistance, it was a new experience. It might have been thanks to Vlad's blessing, or maybe her comrades' voice, Ouka didn't know which one it was.

However, currently Mephisto was fully aware of the strength the girl called Ootori Ouka had.

"Saionji! Shoot me!"

While desperately wrestling with Mephisto, Ouka desperately appealed to Usagi.

"If you think of me as a comrade, even if it's just a little bit... shoot!"

"Don't shoot!"

"I beg you, shoot me! Saionji!"

After she heard Ouka's roar, Usagi put strength into the finger holding the trigger.

"——Roger!!"

A dry gunshot sounded, and a bullet was released. It flew straight without straying, and pierced Ouka's shoulder. From her shoulder, blood started to flow.

Mephisto couldn't withstand the pain that came as the bullet tore away the flesh and started panting.

"YOU BASTARDSSSSSSS!!"

Her scream roared, the bullet bit into the shoulder bone and caused her accordingly intense pain.

However, Mephisto was accustomed to this degree of pain. No matter how many bullets pierce her, the strength in her body would remain.

"——Don't get carried awayyyy!!"

Along with a howl, she turned the two handguns she held towards Usagi.

However, before she could hear the sound of her own gun's firing, a sound of dread emanated from her body.

——**riiiiiiiiiiiiiiiinnn...!!!**

At first it sounded like a sound of a bell, the sound increased and soon after it started to feel like an earthquake that shook her brain.

"?! What?! O-ouch! It hurts it hurts it hurtsssssss! The bone... my head is cracking apart!"

"Kh... aaah...!"

"My brain, it's going to break... such pain, what's thi——gugiaaaaaaah!"

While holding her head with both of her hands, Mephisto rolled on the ground.

An unbearable pain has enveloped her entire body and brain. The bullet Usagi used, was one made by Ikaruga out of specially made material called "high vibration damascan steel". Although it wasn't well known since it wasn't an anti-magic material, it brought tremendous "pain" to human body. It's killing capability was no different from that of a bullet used by military, but it has a property that makes it vibrate when it contacts phosphoric acid inside the human body, after being implanted directly into human bone it starts to vibrate and send pain signals directly to the brain through the nerves.

That pain, was something out of this world.

"GIIIIIiiiiiiiiiiii!!! HIGUAAAAAAA!"

"Ng...khh...!"

When struggling against Mephisto, Ouka endured tremendous pain. Compared to the pain she felt in her heart, physical pain was something trivial. She clenched her teeth and endured it.

Mephisto was screaming miserably, she couldn't stand even a second longer of the pain. Along with her screams, she finally pulled out a blue-colored instant charm from her backpack.

The escape-purposed instant charm 《Direct Soul》. A magic that could be called astral projection, the only magic aside from possession that could allow Mephisto to leave a body.

A distorted evil spirit could be seen leaving Ouka's body.

For the sake of this happening, Ikaruga had Usagi embed a bullet made out of Damascus steel into Ouka's body.

Mephisto's spirit body was blurry like a ghost, and it soared into the sky at a high speed while distorting time and space.

——I won't let you get away!

Usagi pulled the bolt, and vigorously ejected an empty casing from inside, it made a loud noise as it hit the ground.

She fixed the bolt handle by pulling it again, pulled out a single bullet from her belt with her left hand and loaded it directly. What she had put in, was a bluish silver bullet.

It was a bullet called 'spirit silver bullet', in addition to being effective against the undead, it was a special bullet that could inflict a wound on a soul. It was more rare than the material called mythril. Before the Witch Hunt War, it had been used in large quantities during a large-scale war with Vampires and was later completely depleted and branded as fantastical material.

Usagi was glad that Ikaruga was able to produce something like that.

With this bullet, and the gun in which her Grandfather's soul dwelled in - the "Belaya Smert", she was able to annihilate that ghost.

"…………"

Mephisto's soul has already ran away far into the sky.

It was steadily climbing into the sky at a speed that made it hard to follow it with human eyes.

Usagi spat out a deep sigh, and stopped quietly.

Her breathing stopped, the sound of her heartbeat reached her ear. Unexpectedly, she felt very comfortable.

What was left, was to blow away the enemy. There was no need to doubt, it was a great feeling. Her breathing was stable and her heartbeat normal.

Her head was cool, her heart hot. Moreover, it was her favorite gun.

The best condition, best motivation, and the finest weapon was available.

Everything else could be left to the gun, she fired.

*That——is all there is!*

The trigger was light, her heart throbbed.

The gunfire sounded, and its roar reached the sky.

Far in the sky, a ghost's scream echoed. As if overlapping with the moon in the night sky, the devil who devoured human souls disappeared without being able to return to her body.

Ouka was unable to endure the pain that drove her crazy and was stunned, losing consciousness. Her eyes were still open, but her vision was turning blurry and it felt like she was about to lose consciousness at any moment.

When she saw the stars reflected in her field of view, she realized she was lying on her back.

Although she noticed that, she didn't feel like getting up.

As she looked into the beautiful moon that lit up the sky, she thought dazedly.

It's been a while since I was this tired... and.

*...I'm sleepy...*

Knowing that if she closed her eyelids, she would lose consciousness she tried to do so. However, before she could do that, her body was shaken lightly and she lightly opened her fatigued eyes.

She saw the beautiful starry sky as well as the faces of her happy and noisy comrades.

"Hey, Ootori! Are you okay?! Come on, respond!"

"She's not breathing?! Do a cardiac massage, ah ahh, she needs artificial respiration, ww-w-what do we do Kusanagi?!"

"Don't die in a place like this! I've dismantled the operative procedure! I need to boast about it to you so don't die!"

"Yes yes, shut up and move away. She's breathing. The pulse's all right as well. But just in case, let's call a Seelie. Her heart must've been exhausted after being hit by that bullet."

The Small Fry Platoon assembled in full force and looked worriedly at Ouka. Before anyone noticed, Ikaruga had joined them.

She held a gun in her hand and was on standby, it seems like she's been there in case something went wrong.

*...even so...*

They really are a noisy bunch, she thought deep in her heart. But seeing them so worried about her, unexpectedly wasn't a bad feeling. She's been always wanting to be looked at this way.

Ouka made a sincere, bitter smile.

*What a cowardly thought... really...*

She laughed at her easy-going self, but it wasn't a bad feeling. But being watched over like this, she seemed quite pitiful, so Ouka summoned her fading consciousness and articulated the words.

"...it's all right...I'm alive...don't...worry..."

After saying that, she closed her eyes.

Ouka engraved everyone's relieved faces in her mind and quietly went to sleep.

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## The Glossary

**Destiny Enchantment** (デイステイニーズ・エンチヤント) - It's written as (絶対運命) meaning "Absolute Fate" .

**Direct Soul** (ダイレクトソウル) - Written as (霊体化) which means "Spirit Form".

# Epilogue

The next day. The Witch-Hunting festival carried on as planned.

The damage caused by the incident related to Mephisto was limited to the church that stood on the training grounds, the students who were under the attraction spell didn't remember anything and everything came to an end without alarming the public.

The student council president upheld the promise she made with Ouka and took over the organization of the Witch-Hunting festival instead of Reima.

『"Must've been hard〜 well done〜. Yes, just like promised."』

While saying so nonchalantly, Nagaru held out her soft-looking cheek towards Takeru.

When Takeru faced Nagaru like that, he started to think. The incident this time, the platoon was involved because of Nagaru that's for sure. However, she was trying to do what she thought was just. Similarly to Sougetsu, she had some kind of ambition, but she couldn't be one-sidedly branded as a villain.

Above all, Takeru said those words influenced by the flow. Takeru felt that he needed to be more responsible as the captain, and act to protect his comrades.

For making him more aware of it, it's not like he didn't feel any gratitude.

That's why, Takeru decided to——pinch Nagaru's cheeks.

『"Aaa〜〜〜〜〜! Ooch och! Iw huwtss! Notch gyoing to hitch me〜?!"』

『"No... without doubt this time you're the one responsible for all of this, but you... since it's not all your fault, that's why umm. I won't be satisfied with hitting you."』

『"Dyats why you pyinchi me〜?!"』

『"If I didn't do anything I wouldn't be able to settle down... since your cheeks seemed soft, I suddenly felt like pinching them..."』

『"Nyuii〜〜〜!"』

When he stopped pinching her and removed his hands, Nagaru rubbed her cheeks with tear-filled eyes.

『"How horrible〜... unexpectedly, are you an S? I've heard you were an M though."』

Takeru ignored her slander and cut to the chase.

『"President, what are you going to do now?"』

『"All the student council members aside from me are dead～, so I have to run a campaign electing members to supplement it. It's a real pain in the ass, I have to do something about the points～."』

『"...then I have a suggestion, are you open for it?"』

As he said that, Nagaru started to listen attentively while looking at Takeru with her amber-colored eyes.

『"How about the 35th Test Platoon helps with the special missions of the student council starting from next year?"』

Although he felt it was an outrageous proposal, he still continued.

『"I'm only capable of doing odd-jobs, I cannot make use of my member's ability effectively. I'm thinking about becoming your strength."』

『"...hmm～...so?"』

『"...'so' you say... if you do that, I'll be troubled."』

『"Nufu～fun."』 she exhibited cat-like behavior and looked straight into Takeru's eyes.

He though she was a shrewd person, it was a good guess.

It was a good thing she realized it quickly.

『"We want you to lend us your strength. The information you have is probably beyond what Ootori has gathered. Valhalla and Inquisition... also information on Relic Eaters, that's what we want."』

『"............"』

『"I won't tell you to fight together with us. No matter what we've been fighting against up until now, you have no knowledge of it. But that's why, we want you to lend us your wisdom."』

As Takeru said that with a serious expression, Nagaru continued to nod and mutter 'hmm hmm'.

『"I shee I shee. But are you really going to enter student council for just that?"』

『"No. We're not entering. I have no intention of burdening you with the role of captain. We'll be only helping out. We're going to remain as the 35th Test Platoon, and you'll be alone in the student council."』

『"Uuu."』

『"Don't 'Uuu' me here."』

He couldn't go easy on this kind of tactician-type person, and he acted strictly with her. The pouting Nagaru suddenly smiled.

『"I didn't expect you to know how to bargain."』

『"It's not a bargain, but trade."』

『"Fufu～, I like that attitude of yours. You've become more capable have you～."』

Nagaru said that and held her hand out to Takeru.

『"It's a deal. I will provide you with information, and you will do work for the student council. Is that fine?"』

『"Yes, I appreciate it."』

He lowered his head and held Nagaru's hand.

『"Nfuu～ amount of comrades has increased! Yaay!"』

『"We're not your comrades."』

『"Uuu."』

『"Don't start with the 'Uuu' again ."』

——And so on, like that, the 35th Test Platoon and student council have teamed up.

Honestly, there were no guarantees since it was an unofficial cooperation which wasn't reported to Chairman and it wasn't sure whether they could trust Nagaru. Nevertheless, Takeru determined that they should bring in Nagaru who was left alone to cooperate with them. Although it was still unclear what will they gain from it, but since her information gathering skills were excellent, it should be useful.

Takeru finally started to move in order to get a better view on things.

"...it's going to get busy from now on."

Chairman's objective, Valhalla's objective, and the truth behind Relic Eaters...

It was as if a huge wall appeared in front of him with a lot of missing pieces. Takeru who only thought about becoming an Inquisitor was dragged into the vortex of events before he noticed.

He still hasn't found a way to break the status quo, but he certainly took a step forward.

Struggling against those who wanted to make use of him and his comrades...

"...well, there's still a lot of problems..."

Murmuring that, Takeru scratched his head. But before he reached these, he had to solve the one at hand.

For example... yeah, the cosplay social meet.

The break time was over, he opened the borrowed classroom's door and sighed.

In front of him, was a scene that seemed like pandemonium.

"How dare you touch a maiden's soft skin! Are you prepared, camera brat?!"

"Y-you're wrong! I didn't touch anyone! Our shoulders only bumped against each other——gefu!!"

A man was sent flying on Takeru's right side.

"I TOLD YOU I'M NOT WEARING A RANDOSELLLLLLLLLL!!"

"B-but I paid for it, why...! This is a scam——gyahhh!"

This time a big man went past Takeru's left side.

"——What happened? Why are you crying? I just answered your question. I have said what I think about you as requested. I mimicked human thinking processes and evaluated you, I ended up with a single word description of you namely 'scum'. To ask someone with such a childish figure to become your wife, from the perspective of an ordinary human you must be suffering some kind of affliction. I shall not call you a sex offender, however I'd like it better if you differentiated 2D from reality. After I analyzed those three points I come up with an answer "Disgusting". You can be represented with a single word like this. I feel that human language is primitive, however this one word perfectly fits you. Disgusting. You make me sick. By saying these versatile words I am able to describe your personality well."

"......stop it...already......"

Furthermore, an azure girl sitting on sofa made a large adult man cry.

When Takeru saw that scene,

"What... is this hell...?"

The melancholic mood he had earlier was blown away, something that seemed like despair took a hold of his heart.

——It was the day of the Witch-Hunting festival. The school was busy with students and tourists visiting it. Since a lot happened in here recently, they didn't expect to attract many customers, but thanks to the leaflets handed out by the Dropout Alliance members the cosplay social meet was thriving... or it was supposed to.

The guests came, a lot of them. But they ran away, almost all of them.

Ikaruga walked towards Takeru who was too scared to enter the classroom.

"I overlooked this. All I thought about were the outer looks, but we do have bankrupt personalities don't we."

"Didn't you notice it... a bit too late?"

Takeru retorted and looked at Ikaruga. She was wearing a sensational cosplay of a devil with wings. Just like Usagi whom he saw yesterday, it was the type that covered the things that should not be visible with patches, moreover they weren't bushy ones like the Usagi's.

It could be said that it's something those below age of 18 shouldn't see. Moreover, she held a whip in her hand.

She soundly hit the whip against her hand a few times.

"......the whip suits you too well."

"You like it? I can service you if you pay money? Softcore? Hardcore? Maybe deep?"

"I'll pass."

Not wanting to be taken for an M, Takeru looked away.

"Oh, yeah. Usagi is waiting for you in the platoon's room. She asked me to tell you if you had come to the classroom."

"Usagi has?"

"Yeah. To fulfill the promise or something."

With that said, he remembered what he promised Usagi. Yesterday he was exhausted and returned home after all was over.

"Is that fine? With such a apocalyptic scene going on."

"We'll manage somehow, so you can go. If it gets tough we can always earn money through a photo session, girls from the other platoons are doing their best as well. Ootori and Nikaido can't do any service... Lapis has some people who can't resist her so it's OK... honestly, it's quite a chore."

When he looked into her eyes, he found they were round and sparkly. She must be having a lot of fun.

Takeru apologized and left for the platoon's room.

"…………"

Five minutes later. After he opened the platoon room's door, he found Usagi and froze.

In front of the sofa, beside the table, stood Usagi.

However, her appearance was... she didn't wear her uniform, she didn't wear the extreme cosplay from the day before either.

Ikaruga Suginami Presents!

It was ribbon. A ribbon like ones used for wrapping presents was the only thing that covered her body.

"Yy-yo-you w-wha-what! C-clothes...!"

"Tt-t-this is... I was told that it would be unforgivable unless I greeted Kusanagi like this... that's why!"

Even if she was told to do so, how could she wear a ribbon like this without suspecting anything. Well, honestly accepting everything is what makes Usagi herself.

"I-i-if it's like t-this, Kusanagi will be happy... is what I was told...! T-t-that's why I!"

Involuntarily, he looked at the ribbon that seemed to dig into her soft chest.

When he looked closely, there were letters written on its surface.

Ikaruga Suginami Presents!

*That dumbass...!*

"H-have I made a mistake after all?! Have I lost control of myself?!"

"You're not at fault. Yeah, Probably not. For now, wear some clothes..."

"Uuu...uu... I've shown you something unsightly..."

"No, it's... not like that... I just don't know where to look... or rather I'm doing my best to control myself... umm."

"...?"

"It's nothing!"

Takeru moved towards Usagi with a flushed face and took his coat off.

Although his heart skipped a beat, it wasn't intended for sure? After specifically stating that in his mind, he wrapped Usagi in the jacket he just took off. She was suddenly surrounded.

"It's winter already... like that you'll catch a cold..."

"...ah, thank you."

"You've got goosebumps, geez."

While facing the other way, he had her wear the jacket.

An embarrassed Usagi moved her finger along her chest.

"Umm... then... about that..."

She moved her mouth and said with difficulty.

"T-the promise... from before..."

Usagi looked up at Takeru, and then looked down again. She was too embarrassed to make eye contact with him.

To Takeru, she seemed extremely cute. He smiled wryly and spontaneously placed a hand on her head. He started to slowly stroke it.

"You did well yesterday, Usagi."

With just that, Usagi narrowed her eyes and tears appeared in them.

If it's this, I'll do it whenever you want. Takeru still had a bitter smile on his face. For him as well, patting her head was something pleasant. As he said it and stroked her head, he felt it was a right thing to do.

"...ehehe."

She made a happy and peaceful smile.

"Can you do... more?"

"Sure."

"............ehehe."

Normally she would act reserved and get angry whenever she was patted.

It was probably just today that she honestly laughed and cried, as well as acted selfishly. It was a rare thing to see Usagi act this spoiled.

After that, even though he promised he'd pat her head for entire day without thinking about it, but he didn't think he would end up patting her head until the day was over...

He thought that there are days like this, and accepted it.

Reima and Usagi's engagement was called off soon after.

The day before the Witch-Hunting festival Tenmyouji Reima went missing. After the battle with Mephisto, Inquisition rushed to the church immediately but wasn't able to find Reima.

In the end, he's been treated as missing.

However, the Small Fry Platoon learned that at later date.

——Right after Mephistopheles has been subdued, at the mock battle training grounds.

Inside of a sea of object mimicking a city, Reima was running away from something that resembled a machine.

"I n-need to... run... away...!"

His legs were tangling, drool was hanging from his mouth and his body was swaying to the sides as he ran.

"I'm not... done yet...! I can't let myself be caught...!!"

His tremendous tenacity acted like a whip lashing his broken heart, allowing him to run. He had to escape school before Inquisition rushed in, if he turned to his father for help, it would work out somehow. Although he would be abused, his family won't abandon him.

Reima believed in his father's mercy and reached ahead.

However, the one standing in the darkness wasn't his father.

He thought it was a member of Inquisition, but that wasn't it.

Clad in dark green armor... with a huge distorted gun in its right hand. Although that figure was similar to Takeru's Witch Hunter form, it was slightly different from it.

It was different from the monster enveloped in azure, a different threat.

"W-what the fuck are you...! Kusanagi's comrade?! L-let me off! I'll apologize however you want! I beg you!"

Weeping miserably, he knelt in front of the demon clad in dark green armor. The demon stared with cold eyes at Reima.

"Whether it's money or position I'll give you anything... I'll be your slave... save me."

"——Die."

It was an abrupt death sentence stated in one short word.

The demon aimed the muzzle towards Reima and fired. With a tremendous roar, dark green magic diffused from the muzzle and destroyed everything in front of it.

Before Reima was able to notice anything, he turned into a blood splatter.

"..........."

The demon stood in the pool of blood left behind by Reima who vanished and with a loud sound he pulled the still smoke-spitting gun's lever.

"Annihilation of the objective complete. Is this fine... Chairman?"

He muttered despite no one being anywhere close. Soon after, a voice sounded in his head.

《"Well done, Kirigaya-kun. Cheers for the good work, you passed the first test."》

The demon clad in dark green... Kyouya frowned when he heard words of appreciation said by Sougetsu.

"Don't give me that. This is the test? Why didn't you allow me to intervene when Kusanagi was fighting? You had me monitor Tenmyouji Reima and Mephisto... and only clean up afterwards?"

《"It couldn't be helped. I didn't expect them to stick their heads in this. I bet it was the student council's work. No matter, although she was told 'Mephisto doesn't exist', Hoshijiro-kun still stirred trouble. Just think of this as of irregular and leave it at that."》

"............"

《"Rest assured. There's a lot of them to kill. You who knows the truth about this world should know that right? From now on, anything can happen in this world."》

"............hmph."

Kyouya spat that out with disgust and directed the huge shotgun towards the sky.

It was a shotgun clad in ominous miasma, on its body "The Malleus Maleficarum V "NERO" " was carved in.

"Then hurry up and start it already...! I won't lose to Kusanagi, so hurry up and kick it off! That second Witch Hunt War of yours!"

He raised a war cry and shot a blank from his shotgun into the air.

Dark green particles were released and lit up the night sky. However, that light was too irregular to be really called 'light', horrifying... and filled with doom.

# Afterwords

It has been a while, my humble name is Yanagimi Touki.

This time the story is about the weakest, and at the same time the strongest girl in the platoon, Usagi. I hope you have enjoyed it? If you did, that makes me rejoice.

By the way, is it true that big boobs float on water?!

Now then, this time it was school festival, it's the first time I've put something from normal school's life in this work. It was more difficult than I thought it would be. I humbly blame the author's bland and routine school life.

The story started to move forward vigorously. Takeru's story. What's the Chairman's purpose? What's the truth behind this world? And why was Takeru chosen as Lapis' contractor? What about Takeru's little sister? Let's leave at this much.

There's more to come! Since I'm going to come up with a development that'll stun you all, stay tuned.

In terms of boobs... flat chests and **funyu**? **funyuu**?

——AntiMagic Academy is going to provide boobs in various shapes and sizes.

And one more announcement.

On 8th of June 2013, 『AntiMagic Academy 35th Test Platoon』 comic's first volume will be released! You can see this or that scene that weren't drawn on the book's illustrations, so look forward to it～!

Now, the credits. The Y&S-sama whom I always inconvenience. Kippu-sensei who has drawn a big breasted loli. Hanao Sutarou-sensei who has drawn the action-packed comic.

And above all, you readers who have picked up this book.

Then, I pray that I'll be able to meet you like this once again.

Yanagimi Touki